

A SPIRITUAL BOUQUET

Faithful. Vigilant. Hardy. Tolerant. Beautiful. So many words describe the simple daffodil. This time of year I can't help but think about what lays beneath the still packed, hardened (but melting!) snow of winter. I am an avid gardener who finds great joy in flowers. I eagerly await those first signs of spring. The brilliant yellow daffodil is one of the first flowers to make its appearance each year. No matter how hard or long the winter is we all know that the daffodils will return.

Daffodils need sun, water, and food much like our souls are fed by our own master gardener, God. They also require a wintering before they can bloom. They are not planted in the spring to arise come summer, but rather they are planted in the fall and must undergo a hardening in winter.

There is such strong symbolism in daffodils to our own spiritual lives. We, too, will undergo a wintering period of suffering before we can blossom into our own glorious spring. And daffodils are perennials, meaning once they are planted, they will repeatedly go through hard winter periods to bloom every year in the spring...over and over. They are truly hardy beings. I've dug up bulbs unknowingly, tossed the dirt behind my shed, and lo and behold, in the spring there they were...canary yellow heads pushing through piles of dirt, grass, and poison ivy: beauty among the weeds.

Daffodils symbolize a rebirth, a new beginning, and the end of winter. They do not just lay dormant during winter, though, with their bulbs buried deep in the ground. It is a dark, cold, and hard place, where the pressure of the snow and winter pushes on the daffodil bulb. Much like our own spirits, we can lie, buried in a dark place, feeling the pressures of suffering upon us. Just as we may not see what is happening to the flower bulbs, it is the same with our own hearts and spirits. We may not see God's hand, but it is there. Eventually we will bloom, and our own petals and leaves will break through the ground.

Romans 5:3-4 states that "We rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope."

When have you felt buried in a deep winter? When have you been pushed but persevered through it? When has your spirit suffered? I have been through many winters in my life, but after each, there was always a spring. "Rejoicing in suffering" is a hard phrase to contemplate, but when we know that the suffering will produce endurance of character and a blossoming of our spirits, it can be uplifting.

So as the snow melts, and we observe the yellow flowers bursting through late winter's ground, let us take a moment to remember. Just like the faithful and steadfast daffodil, we know there will be more winters, but there will *always* be the spring.

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. & Irene B. Garabedian, and Robert Demers by Shirley and family.

The altar flowers on Sunday, March 15th were given in loving memory of my husband, Peter Mayhew Merrill on the 10th anniversary of his passing by Lorna Mattus-Merrill.

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER THIS WEEK...

- ✠ Chris Brown, Cora Arsenault's cousin, who is in treatment for stage 4 melanoma
- ✠ Cheryl's mother, a friend of the Ingrassia's, who is in ICU following surgery
- ✠ Health and healing for those who have been struggling
- ✠ For those searching for new jobs or starting new jobs
- ✠ Patricia Shackett who is at home and recovering from a car accident that took place in February. Pray for healing and strength as she is having difficulty with walking.
- ✠ Naomi Poku and husband, Ziggy, on the birth of their son, Jalondo Isaiah on March 4th.
- ✠ Those struggling with their faith that they may find their way back
- ✠ Zach, a high-school senior, recovering from surgery.

OTHER INFORMATION

THANK YOU for the donations of 1 lb Coffee cans (plastic & aluminum). The altar flowers are transferred out of the liners into the coffee cans so Wesley Shut-Ins can enjoy the flowers as they are donated. If you have any, please drop them off in the Welcome Office. Thank you.

EASTER FLOWER ORDER deadline of March 25th is quickly approaching. There are order forms in this Herald as well as in the Welcome office. Please be sure to place your form with payment in the box in the office or mail it to Wesley, Attn: Debi. ***Again, the deadline for orders is March 25th.*** The cost for each flower is \$10. ***Please remember...*** Payment must accompany the order form for your order to be processed. Thank you.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY... Do you have 30 minutes to spare on Monday or Tuesday? Wesley is looking for a volunteer to walk through the chapel and sanctuary and clean up from Sunday services. If you have some spare time and would like to help, please speak with Debi or Lorna in the office. Thank you.

FESTIVAL OF SINGING—CHANGE OF DATE... NOW SATURDAY, MARCH 28TH

Join Kwaku Dankwah and the Ghanaian choir in singing and learning some hymns (and their meanings) from the Ghanaian tradition. We will meet in the Chapel on Saturday, March 28th from 9:00—10:00 am.

EASTER EGG HUNT ON APRIL 4TH... You are invited to the Easter Egg Hunt and Crafts on Saturday, April 4th from 10 to 11:30 am. Please provide one dozen pre-filled eggs for each child you bring. These can be filled with stickers, candy, 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.

Any youth who would like to help hide Easter eggs can tell Jean Grant. Please invite your relatives and friends... Just be sure that someone brings 12 eggs for each child. The event is sponsored by Education and Sarah Circle.

EASTER SUNDAY - BUY A COOKIE! On Easter Sunday please make sure to buy a spring cookie from the youth group to help us raise money for our trip to Youth2015! If you know you would like to place a large order please let us know at youth@weslwyworc.org.

WAUM WOMEN'S RETREAT... A huge **thank you** to everyone involved in making the WAUM Women's Retreat (March 7) such a light-filled event. Thanks to Jean Grant for the luscious breakfast, and the men's prayer group (Russ Ulbrich, Kris Reed, Chris Kerns, Peter Hansen, Jerry Warren, Bill Wong) for the hearty lunch.

Our workshop leaders did such a wonderful job -- Chloe Sundberg, Janet Huehls (recommended by Donna Hirtle), Lisa Fagerstrom, Betsy Pennino, Emily Smith, Esi Korsah, Carolyn Bellil, Susan Williams and Chris Flagg, as did our inspiring Worship Leader the Reverend Nancy Collins of Aldersgate UMC, and pianist Mary Jett Woodring.

We were also grateful for the childcare offered by Abbe Adams and Josephine Agyen. Thank you to all those who volunteered to help set up and clean up. Everyone who attended brought her unique light.

We feel that we definitely found some new ways to shine out God's light.

Thank you, Allison Hansen and Barbara Ingrassia

THANKS to wonderful people who have contributed 27 useful articles for the young mothers as they move into apartments upon leaving our neighbor Florence House.
~ UMW Collection

SMALL GIFTS FOR SHELTERS... Sarah Circle will again be collecting useful or edible items for Worcester shelters. On Sundays through Palm Sunday (March 29th), 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 at betspenn35@hotmail.com.

MISSION MATTERS

COMMUNITY SUPPER LEADERS NEEDED FOR MAY, JUNE, JULY...

All months (starting with May 30th which is after Memorial Day) are available for you to volunteer with your group! Quite thorough guidelines have been developed and written, based on experiences with the first 16 suppers, and needed support will be given. Food purchases will be reimbursed by the Mission Committee. If you can volunteer, please tell Pastor Shandi or Betsy Pennino.

MARCH COMMUNITY SUPPERS...

On March 28, Linda D'Acri's team will be preparing and serving corned beef and cabbage, carrots, potatoes, salad, beverage and dessert. If you could volunteer to set up, serve or clean up, please contact Linda. Donations of cupcakes, brownies, or bars are also requested.

THE MISSION COMMITTEE WOULD WELCOME NEW MEMBERS.

If you would like to join us, please tell Pastor Shandi or Betsy Pennino. Our meetings are second Wednesdays at 7 pm-- March 11, April 8, May 13 and June 10.

SAVE THE DATE!!! Please save **May 17th** for an **Imagine No Malaria** program and lunch, after our 10:30 service!

CARTY CUPBOARD FOOD PANTRY

Carty Cupboard has several volunteer opportunities available at this time...

We are in need of 2 people to work during Friday morning's food distribution. You will be distributing the pre-packed grocery bags of food, and the extras donated to us. You must be able to lift 40 lbs. This opportunity runs from now until the beginning of May, and is for Fridays from 9:00 AM until 12:15 PM.

We are also in need of someone to fill in when the current folks are unable to get the donated bakery items from Price Chopper on the corner of Park Ave and Highland Street Tuesday and Friday mornings at 8:00 AM, and then deliver them to the church.

If you are interested in helping, please call Nancy at 508-887-1481. *Thank you!*



SONGS FOR THE EARTH

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2015

4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Mechanics Hall, 321 Main St, Worcester, MA

Members of the Wesley Choir will be joining up with the Master Singers of Worcester and several other area choirs in an upcoming concert at Mechanics Hall.

This concert will include Gwyneth Walker's setting of Thoreau in "To Love This Earth", the Chief Seattle text "Earth Is Our Mother" by Dave Brubeck, and the spectacular paean to the Creator of the natural world, "Benedicite", by Andrew Carter. The program will also feature the world premiere of Worcester composer Dorothy VanAndel Frisch's "Cherish The Home We All Share." The orchestra will also perform Darius Milhaud's Ballet "Creation du Monde".

At 3:00 pm there will be a pre-concert lecture entitled "Conserving Massachusetts Landscapes in the Era of Climate Change, Understanding the Past, Shaping the Future" presented by Mass Audubon President Henry George Tepper, an internationally recognized conservationist with significant experience in land protection and advocacy.

Tickets are available at: www.mswma.org/tickets/

SUNDAY SCHOOL

There is a lot going on in Sunday School this Spring!

Please note some important dates.

Easter Egg Hunt Sarah Circle and Christian Education will be hosting the annual Easter Egg hunt at Wesley on **Saturday April 4th, from 10 -11:30**. 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.



VBS! It's time to pre-register for Vacation Bible School. This free camp will be offered **July 6 – 10, from 5 – 8 p.m.** (dinner for kids at 5 p.m.). Our theme this year is “Everest: Conquering Challenges with God’s Mighty Power.” The kids will “trek” through VBS while discovering God’s power and promises all along the way. Registration is open to children in grades Kindergarten through 5th. We will also have a special group for middle-schoolers to meet in discussion on the same theme. **See Jean Grant to pre-register or volunteer.** More detailed registration information will follow.

Lent Mission Project: “Fill the Arks” for Heifer Recently, we handed out little “arks” (boxes) for children and the congregation to collect money toward our mission project with Heifer International, a non-profit organization that provides resources and animals to countries in need, where they can use the animals for food and materials to promote self-sufficiency. Filled boxes will be collected after Lent. We will learn about Heifer’s mission throughout Lent. The mission retreat to Heifer Farm in Rutland is on **MAY 30th** (drop off at church at 11:30 a.m., with a drive to the farm. Pick up is at 4:30 p.m.). **See Jean Grant to pre-register or volunteer.**

Cans for Carty Cupboard To help out Carty Cupboard, we will be doing a food drive during March. Imagine if every child brought in just 2 canned or boxed items each week, we could collect 200 or more items to donate to this cause! Please think about Carty on your next grocery trip. We will have a collection box upstairs.

CLEANING CLOSETS I will be cleaning several closet areas on the 3rd floor on April 11th from noon – 3 p.m. I could use a few more sets of hands. If you’d like to help out, contact me at grantgirl05@yahoo.com. Thanks!

WESLEY YOUTH GROUP

New Meeting Time:

1st and 3rd Sundays 12-1 pm after church in the Youth Room.

Youth2015 Update: We have 14 youth and 5 adult chaperones signed up for Youth2015! Fantastic! If any groups/committees/circles would like to donate money towards this trip, we would greatly appreciate it. Please see Phil Smith.

April 4th: Youth2015 Easter Cookie Fundraiser 12-3 pm Meet in the kitchen at noon to bake and frost Easter sugar cookies. We will sell them Easter Sunday for \$1.00 each.

April 12th: 6:31 Service at Aldersgate UMC Leave the church parking lot at 5:20 pm.

April 19th: Youth Group Meet after church in the youth room.



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JOHN IN ULTRA-HIGH CONTEXT: JOHN 4:46-5:30

(notes from the Brewer Hall Study Group, March 8-15, 2015)

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Back in Galilee after his encounter with the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria and her incorporation into the larger network of his followers, Jesus performs his second sign, a healing in Cana – the location of his first sign (water to wine). He then returns to Jerusalem for an undescribed feast and performs his third sign – the rescue of a lame man. [Altogether, Jesus performs seven signs in John's Gospel.] After the third sign, Jesus provides an explanation of his role as the Son, and the works that he has and will carry out for the Father (healings and judgment).

4:46-54 (Second Sign) John's account of this healing may be another variant of the Synoptic healing story (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10), but here taking place in Cana (the location of the first sign), and on behalf of a courtier's son (whereas the Synoptic versions take place in Capernaum on behalf of a centurion's servant). Both this sign and the first sign have elicited belief (2:11; 4:53), {but the second sign is notable for the remote healing of the courtier's son and the corresponding faith elicited by his father.} The author's UHC stress on *new life* (vv. 50, 51, 53) is linked to Jesus' prior statement that whoever believes will have new life (3:15-16, 36).

5:2-13 (Third Sign) It is unclear which festival brings Jesus back to Jerusalem after the Passover visit (2:23). Sick persons lying beside the pool were there not only to seek healing, but also to beg. They were the "poorest" (perhaps ten percent of the total population), living in appalling conditions just outside the city walls or along the hedgerows of adjacent fields. **vv. 5-9a** Although the sick man could get around (slowly), he was without family or friends (v. 7), and there is no explanation of how the man was fed or got to the pool on a daily basis, and able to survive for 38 years with the ailment.

vv. 9b-13 Jesus' command to the healed man to walk away with his mat breaks one of Israel's Sabbath regulations mediated by Moses (Ex 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15) and emphasized/clarified by Jeremiah as the prohibition of "servile work" – work done by slaves in elite households (Jer 17:21-22). But here, the man carried his mat so publicly that his actions came to the attention of the Judeans who accused him of lawbreaking.

5:14-18 (Healing follow-up and controversy) Scholars have often puzzled over the fact that Jesus later rejected the idea that suffering is payment for sin (9:2), but here seems to accept it. In Mediterranean societies, "sin" was a breach of interpersonal relations, and as the man seemed to be devoid of friends to put him in the pool, Jesus' comment makes sense. As a friendless outcast, the man was indeed a "sinner", an outsider unattached to a group. Though he may have been sick, he was also "ill" in the social sense. Given his age and the short life expectancies of antiquity, should the man again disrupt his relationship with his former group, he would indeed risk the worst of all fates – having no one to bury and remember him. **vv. 15-16** By running to tell the Judeans of Jesus' identity as soon as he learns it, the healed man was not necessarily ungrateful ("naming names", thereby risking persecution for Jesus) –

he may perhaps have been more focused on decisive action to reestablish the breach with his former social group. **vv. 17-18** Jesus' defense of his Sabbath healing contends that God continues to work, even on the Sabbath, and that his Judean opponents are unaware of this fact, taking a narrow view of the fourth commandment proper (Ex 20:8-10) but ignoring its rationale (Ex 20:11), which derives directly from Gen 2:3. Essentially, Jesus argues that the present age *is* the hallowed seventh day of creation, and that human beings cannot confine God's activity to the first six days. Jesus' interpretation of the fourth commandment, and claim of kinship with God (v. 18), elicit the opening note of his opponents' evil intentions.

5:19-30 (Jesus' explanation of his role as God's Son) vv. 19-20 Jesus' word of honor – *amen amen* (“Truly truly”) again underscores his intent to speak the truth in this important kinship statement (affirming the ancient dictum, “Like father, like son”). More than a matter of biology, kinship is a matter of loyalty and solidarity. The verb “love” describes attachment or loyalty (especially *group* attachment) and associated behavior, rather than the emotion of affection. The verb *philei* (“loves”) is in the present progressive (continuous) tense, denoting ongoing loyalty. The first work that the Father assigned to the Son was the giving of life (in one form or another) manifested in the second and third signs. **v. 21** This is a classic brokerage statement – the resources are those of the patron (God), not the broker (Jesus). **vv. 22-25** The second work assigned to the Son was to be the execution of the Father's judgment (public condemnation). Jesus gives his word of honor twice in this passage. In this context, he is responding to the Judean charge that he made himself equal to God (v. 18). His claims to be a loyal broker (v. 21) suggest otherwise – a loyal broker can do nothing other than what a patron does (v. 19). Jesus' claim of kinship comes close to equality, yet later Jesus will directly contradict equality with the Father (“the Father is greater than I”; 14:28c). Kin groups share a roughly equal honor status, yet a father always has greater honor than a son.

vv. 26-30 Some scholars view vv. 21-25 as John's description of a “realized eschatology” – that the final condition of humankind is occurring already, whereas vv. 26-30 describe a much different “final eschatology”. There is much dispute over which section is older. John's Gospel generally uses the title “Son of Man” in the sense of a sky being {descending from the realm of heaven at the incarnation (1:14), and ascending and re-descending after the resurrection (20:17, 19, 26)}.

However, it seems that eschatology is not at issue in John's Gospel. John's UTC perspective is that Jesus gives new life already now – new life enjoyed by members of the Johannine anti-society in their continuing interpersonal experiences of the Son of Man. In Johannine life, all time collapses into the present – a broad, enduring present.

– 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?

Prayer is a component of our Sunday morning worship each week, and there are several points in the order of service in which we offer our prayers. Each week our basic pattern of worship includes a prayer after the call to worship. Did you notice that this past Sunday, the Fourth Sunday of Lent this opening prayer was designated as a prayer of confession? Confession expresses our attitudes of humility and repentance. Confession is an important part of Christian prayer both public and private. A prayer of confession is included in most communion liturgies and is always a fitting attitude of prayer, but especially so during the season of Lent which is traditionally a season for reflection, self-examination, and repentance.

General confessions of sin are characteristic of worship even in Biblical times. There are many examples of such confessions in the Bible — for example Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143 in particular are known as penitential psalms, and are often used in Christian liturgies involving confession of sin. Open confessions have been a practice of Christians since the early church, and there are many New Testament references to both public and private confession of sin. In open general confession the believing community acknowledges a corporate sense of its unrighteousness, and often also includes expression of sorrow for transgressions as well as petitions for forgiveness. In silent personal confession we are given the opportunity for introspection and self-examination. In some traditions such as Orthodox and Roman Catholic forms of Christianity, there is also a sacramental form of confession involving formal confession of individual sins before a priest.

A prayer of confession is usually followed by words of forgiveness and assurance which remind us that God's love and mercy surpass our sin. True confession always includes the acceptance of God's forgiveness, and in most liturgies confession, pardon and assurance are inextricably linked.

*Submitted by,
Deborah 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>
Mon., March 30	Wed., April 1
Mon., April 13	Wed., April 15

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.



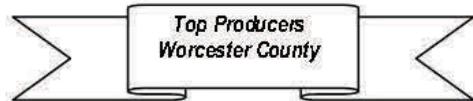
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WESLEY HERALD
MARCH 18, 2015

***DON'T MISS OUT...
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Music Assistant	Deborah O'Driscoll
Director of Children's Christian Education	Jean Grant
Director of Christian Formation & Discipleship	Lisa Fagerstrom
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Building Superintendent	Phil Johnson
Business Administrator	Lorna Mattus-Merrill
Church Secretary	Debi Ritacco
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Ghanaian Association	Emmanuel Okrah
Events & Fellowship	
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