

## **Growing in Grace: Practicing Intentional Faith Development**

As your pastor, I have had many dreams and prayers for you - dreams for your Christian life and health. Some dreams have come true, while others have yet to be realized. One prayer and dream that continues to occupy my heart is for us to see *more and more* people becoming involved in small groups for intentional faith development. I am a passionate believer in the power God gives a small group of people to grow together in grace through a learning community.

Jesus said, *“where two or three are gathered in my name, I am among them”* (Matthew 18:20). Jesus modeled for us that we learn in community. When he walked the earth, Jesus weaved people into a community around him and taught them through parables, stories, signs, and the example of his own life. The community Jesus formed continued to model this way of learning when they gathered – day to day – in the temple and in their homes, devoting themselves to *“the apostles teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers”* (Acts 2:42).

When John Wesley, founder of Methodism, started a movement to revitalize his own Anglican denomination, the movement grew to become the Methodist Church because John Wesley’s “method” was to intentionally organize people into small groups for the study of Scripture, prayer, and to “watch after one another in love.” Early Methodists gathered in homes and workplaces and schools. They shared their doubts and hopes and talked about how they had seen God’s grace at work in their lives. They encouraged one another – and, for many of them, without a pastor leading them.

For Jesus, the early church, and the Methodist movement, the community provided a supportive network for testing ideas, gaining from other people’s experiences, sharing the love of Christ, and holding one another accountable to following Jesus in real and very practical ways. They did this with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. How I dream for this type of learning for the people connected to Wesley UMC!

I have dreams of helping you form small groups around your neighborhood or zip code, small groups based on your life-stage and life situation (e.g. youth, men, women, mothers of young children), and/or small groups emerging out of your interests and needs (e.g. persons in care-giving situations, grief support, intercessory prayer). I have this dream and I want to invite you to talk with me and Lisa Fagerstrom about how we might best support you to get one of these types of groups started for you.

In hope and faith, *Pastor Shandi*

## **LIGHTINGS AND ALTAR FLOWERS...**

**The Rose window** lighting for August is given in loving memory of Rena Stephenson by Mark and Cindy Muncey.

*The August Tower lighting is available for dedication. The cost is \$40 for the month. If you are interested in this lighting, please contact Debi in the office at 508-799-4191, ext. 102. Thank you.*

## **WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER THIS WEEK...**

- ✠ Tim that he may get back on his feet
- ✠ Family and friends of Steve Trainor who passed away on July 24
- ✠ Shongedzai Mawokomatanda and co-workers who are being laid off by their company
- ✠ Elm Park Ministry Urban Day Camp which starts its two week camp this week
- ✠ Family of Doris Betterley who passed away last week
- ✠ Agnes and son, Kwame, who are looking for shelter and home, that God may help them find something quickly
- ✠ Chris Scott graduated from Navy Boot Camp at the Recruit Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois on July 31st. He will be continuing on to Washington DC to be in the Navy Ceremonial Guard for the next 2 years.

## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS...**

The Church Conference this year will be held on Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm at Westborough UMC.

SPRC will meet on Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am at Westborough UMC.

Please watch the Sunday News & Herald for more information to come.

## **VOLUNTEER NEEDED...**

On Friday, August 28<sup>th</sup> the church office is looking for a volunteer to come in and answer the phones from 9 am—12 pm. Both Lorna and Debi will be out this day. If you can help us out, please contact Debi in the office via email or by calling (office@wesleyworc.org or 508-799-4191 x102). Thank you.

**UMW IS BACK FOR A NEW SEASON!** The Ministry Fair is coming soon, and we will be brainstorming ideas for our table after the 10:30 service on Sunday, August 30. Look for Allison Hansen in Brewer Hall near the coffee and we'll find a room that's free for 15 or 20 minutes.

Our next Steering Committee will be Saturday, September 12 at 8:45 a.m. in Mary Ellis Lounge. All circle chairs and officers are invited -- if you can't be there, please send a representative from your circle.

Come join a group that can be a force for good in the world! Ask Allison to find out more at 508-853-5339 or AChis4788@aol.com.

*~ Allison Hansen, co-president*

**WESLEY MEMBERS VISIT THE MOSQUE...** The Worcester Islamic Mosque shared their observation of Ramadan with twenty-two members and staff from our Wesley church on the evening of July 2. We toured the mosque and were given a presentation regarding the observance of the holy month of Ramadan. Following the presentations and after sundown, we shared an ethnic Indian dinner with members of the mosque and other invited guests. Our relationship with the Worcester Islamic Mosque will continue as we plan to host an interfaith program in the fall. Watch for further details and please lend your support as we search for peace and better understanding in our own Greater Worcester community.

*~ Margaret Watson*

**FURNITURE DONATION NEEDED FOR REFUGEES:** The Ascentria Care Alliance is looking for furniture donations to provide to new refugee families coming to resettle in Worcester in the months of August and September. Items needed include: tables, chairs, bureaus, sofas, easy chairs, coffee tables, lamps, twin/ full bed frames (no used mattresses or boxsprings). If you have donations or have questions, please contact Beth Singley at [esingley@ascentria.org](mailto:esingley@ascentria.org) or call 774-243-3027. Thank you.

**REMEMBER CHRISTMAS IN AUGUST...** – As you do back-to-school shopping please get something for the people in northern Maine: a package of socks or underwear, jeans or sneakers. No need to worry about sizes. Check the list in your bulletins or the Heralds for suggestions. Many of the needed items are modestly priced. *Thank you, Nancy Cook*

**IHN NEWS** – We will be assisting the IHN families the week of Oct 25-31. 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*

## MESSAGES FROM THE CHURCH BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

### Year to Date Budget Results through July

	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Total Income	335,093	340,246	- 5,154
Total Expense	384,576	380,476	4,100
Difference	-49,483	-40,231	-9,253
Pledges	146,024	169,177	-23,153

Please make every effort to keep your pledges up to date. Just a reminder, you can now make donations on the Wesley website while you're away. Several folks have used this method of giving while they are traveling, and it has been well received. The website address is [www.wesleyworc.org](http://www.wesleyworc.org).

### Project Updates

#### Retaining Wall

I am happy to report that the two retaining walls have been completed. This week we expect to award the contract for chain link fencing and to have the lower level parking lot repaved on Saturday, August 8. In the space between the two walls, Jerry Warren installed materials to hamper the growth of weeds, along with 15 yards of mulch. We are waiting for a planting design from Burnham Landscaping in Holden to fill in this area. We are hopeful the lot will be available for parking on Sunday, August 16, 2015.

#### Automatic Door Opener – State Street Ramp Door

The automatic door opener is now complete. By pressing the handicapped button on the right railing, you can now gain access to the State Street entrance on Sundays for worship services, and on Wednesdays for Carty Cupboard to obtain food. Thank you to the UMW for their generous donation towards the cost of this piece of equipment.

#### The Nathaniel Wheeler Trust Grant

We are working with Burnham Landscaping to do a landscape design for the front of the church, using the Wheeler Trust Funds and some of the capital budget to cover the labor costs. I anticipate this area will be completed during the Fall. Instead of replacing the lawn, they will work with weed killers and fertilizers to bring the lawn back over time, and will add some easy care plantings to enhance the front of the church. Thank you to Ken Hedenburg and Chloe Sundberg for all of their work to help us obtain this grant!

#### Third Floor Men's Room Repairs

This project is a work in progress. Work has been done on the roof to stop the leaking, and efforts have been taken by two of the trustees to review the project and get an idea of costs to refurbish the room.

### Kitchen, Pantry, Sewing Room, Bathroom Floor Refinishing

Phil Johnson recently completed a project to re-coat the floors in these spaces. They shine so much now that they actually look like they are wet! Great job, Phil!

### Brewer and East Hall Floor Refinishing

This week the Brewer and East Hall floors are being refinished—an annual event. Thank you in advance to Phil for doing this project and the heat and humidity of August! The floors always look great when he is done!

### Other News

In terms of building use, I am happy to report that a new AA group for women is forming. Their first meeting will be on Thursday, August 6, 2015 from 8 to 9:15 p.m. Their meetings will take place in the middle room of the newly refurbished lower level.

Also, Champion Youth will return the first week in September, offering classes in art to young children in the Worcester area. These classes take place in the Easter Room on the third floor on Tuesdays. The registration process and first classes will begin on September 22 and run through the end of the year.

I am sad to say that the Play-Learn Preschool has closed its doors and will not be continuing in September. This was due to low enrollment numbers and the illness of one of the preschool teachers. We are so sorry to see them go, and pray for Judy Stern's speedy recovery.

Lastly, I hope you are having a wonderful summer! I look forward to seeing everyone in September!

*Peace, Lorna*

## **FROM CARTY CUPBOARD**

Due to the ongoing parking lot construction the Carty Cupboard Food Pantry will continue with the shortened schedule of being open only on Wednesdays from 1:00 to 3:00PM in August and Mondays, Aug 10<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>. We will resume our regular schedule beginning on Wednesday, September 9th when we will be open once again on Fridays.

## **MISSION MATTERS**

**August 29 Community Supper...** Our DCFD Lisa will be in charge of the August 29<sup>th</sup> supper from 4 to 6 pm. The menu will be pulled pork, bbq chicken, corn, salad, cornbread/rolls, drinks and dessert. Donations of cupcakes and cookies will be much appreciated. Lisa has been leading a vesper service during the last half hour. Please join us!

## IT'S CHRISTMAS IN AUGUST...

Once again we are coordinating a “*Christmas in August*” drive for the Economic Ministry in Salem, Maine. This year our goal is 1,500 new toys and other items.

### *We need your help! How?*

♥ Take advantage of sales you see to acquire items that can be used for the Ministry’s Christmas Shop—clothing, housewares, toys, sports items, batteries, videos, personal care items, tools, gift cards, etc. ♥ If you do not want to “shop” and would rather make a donation, we will be happy to shop for you. ♥ We have a red and green box in Brewer Hall where you can leave your **unwrapped** gifts. A general gift list is below, otherwise a complete list of gift ideas is on that box. ♥ **If you wish to deliver your new, unwrapped gifts to the truck behind Epworth UMC, it will be there from 9 to noon on Saturday, Aug. 29 and Sunday, Aug. 30. If you would like our ever-willing volunteer Nancy Cook to deliver your donations, please leave them in the Brewer Hall red-and-green box by Sunday, Aug. 23.**

**You may save any gently used items which you wish to donate for our November collection which also goes to the Maine Economic Ministry.**

**Items For All Ages** - socks, underwear, sleepers/pajamas/nightgowns, slippers, robes, shirts, pants/jeans, sweaters, sweatshirts/pants, (warm clothing) coats, gloves, hats, scarves, personal care items, books, music CD’s, music players, videos/DVD’s, McDonalds/Burger King coupons. **NO MUSIC WITH FOUL OR VIOLENT LYRICS.** (Please include batteries when needed.)

**Children** - Toys for boys and girls from infant through pre-teens stuffed animals, dolls, board/card/handheld games, skates, sleds, sports toys, stocking stuffers. **NO GUNS OR WAR TOYS.**

**Youth/Teens** - Games, watches, hair dryers, curling irons, razors, brushes, hair accessories, purses, wallets, luggage, sports items, phone cards.

**Adults/Elderly** - Work gloves & hats, gas cards, phone cards, gift certificates, postage stamps, watches, razors, hair dryers, Bibles, cans of nuts, popcorn, candy (some sugar-free).

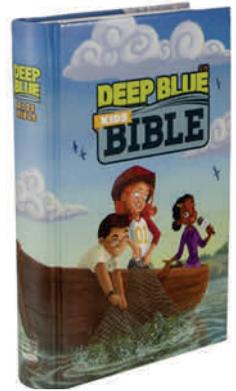
**Household and General** - Blankets/comforters, sheets, pillows, bath/kitchen towels, toaster, mixer, other kitchen appliances, pots and pans, utensils, glasses, dishes, bowls, hot pads, radios, clocks, thermometers, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, small hand/power tools, cleaning supplies, snow shovel, ice melt, sand pail, ice scraper, dry gas, deicer, lamps, flashlights, home decorating items, batteries for necessary items, Walmart gift cards.

If you have any questions, please contact Betsy Pennino or Donna Hirtle of the Mission Committee. Thank you, in advance, for your gifts.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

### Fall Curriculum Kick-off!

Time for us to dive into the Deep Blue in Sunday School! We've been busy this summer in Sunday school with attending VBS, learning about the roles of youth in the Bible, exploring key Bible verses, decorating our classrooms with a new theme, as well as decorating Bible bags for our new Bibles. Our new curriculum, "Deep Blue" will be kicking off on September 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. The children will be introduced to the new curriculum, move on to their new classrooms, and on **Sep 13<sup>th</sup>** (children in grades K through 5) will be presented with their Deep Blue Bible. This is also ministry fair weekend, so please stop by our table to learn more about Sunday School!



### 9:30 a.m. Sunday School hour...

We are exploring a new Sunday School opportunity for mixed youth/children ages during the 9:30 a.m. hour on Sundays. We welcome those interested in catering to the children's ministry to be in prayer about helping with this opportunity. We are seeking 2-3 volunteers to coordinate this ministry. The leaders would work with staff on providing a weekly curriculum to children who wish to attend during this hour (while parents attend adult Sunday School). This is a great opportunity for anyone at the church to get involved with the children. Please see Lisa or Jean if this interests you. Thank you!



## YOUTH GROUP

The Wesley Youth Group (Grades 6-12) will meet on Sunday, Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> for pizza and planning for the coming year. We'll meet upstairs in the Youth Room following the 10:30 worship service. We'll spend some time talking about the summer and the experiences of Youth 2015, sing some, eat some, play some, and plan some! Come be a part of the continuing tradition of the Wesley Youth Group and a part of the vision for its future! Youth Group will continue to meet the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of every month following the 10:30 worship service. [Be on the lookout for a few other fun activities being planned for the end of the summer!]

## SPIRITUAL FORMATION OPPORTUNITY...

In the coming months, there will be opportunities provided to view and discuss DVD's of Elaine Heath, Professor of Evangelism at Perkins School of Theology, as she presents her vision for the future of mainline churches (particularly United Methodist churches). Professor Heath is a dynamic presenter with an inspirational vision for and experiences in helping churches come alive in living out their faith in communities and neighborhoods.

There will be several opportunities to take part in viewing and discussing the videos. The 9:30 Adult Topical Sunday School Class will use the videos as their curriculum beginning on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> and continuing on September 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. There will be opportunities in September and early October to view and discuss the videos after the 10:30 worship service. There will also be mid-week day and evening times provided if folks are interested in a time during the week. Additionally, a copy of the videos can be provided to anyone wishing to hold a small group on their own or view them with a committee or circle meeting.

Please call Lisa Fagerstrom at 508-799-4191 x106 or e-mail ([Lisa@wesleyworc.org](mailto:Lisa@wesleyworc.org)) her if you are interested in taking part in this thought provoking video series and conversations.



**MEMORIALS...** There are many ways to honor those who have died recently or in the past. Birthdays, graduations, and weddings are reminders. At Wesley, a gift to Memorial Gifts Funds or flowers on the altar, or lights to brighten the church at night can honor those in the past. Speak with those at the Welcome Office for guidance.

**TRAVELING TO A NATIONAL PARK THIS SUMMER?** Encounter God in a truly awe-inspiring wilderness setting! Did you know you can worship in many of the country's major national parks this summer? Look for notices about Sunday services provided by A Christian Ministry in the National Parks (ACMNP). ACMNP is an interdenominational ministry that embodies and extends the ministry of Jesus Christ to those who live, work, and vacation in our national parks. For more information, ask Allison Hansen or visit [acmnp.com](http://acmnp.com).

## 2015 SPIRIT-FILLED SUMMER WORSHIP

Sunday Evenings in August at 6 pm join us for an outside service at Epworth UMC, 64 Salisbury Street for worship. Bring a lawn chair or blanket. (Rain? Worship will be held inside.)

August 9	Artistic Flare
August 16	Ghanaian Worship
August 23	Camp Family Fun
August 30	Emerging Responses

*Be prepared to **Catch the Spirit***

## REGISTER NOW FOR FINANCIAL PEACE U STARTING SEPT. 20,2015!

Are you looking for a change in your life or how you handle personal finance? Financial Peace University (FPU) is a 9-week life-changing program that empowers and teaches you how to make Bible based money decisions to help you achieve your financial goals. We'll walk you through the basics of **budgeting, dumping debt, planning for retirement and college tuition, understanding all kinds of insurance, and much more.** Stop wondering where your money went and start telling it where to go!

FPU offers financial hope to newlyweds, young families, families with college bound children, and retirees. It is not just for those who are in debt but offers more.

- Stop the money fights.
- Create a plan that gives you freedom.
- Know your kids are taken care of.
- Be free to give like you've always wanted.

For more information or to sign up for the program, contact Bill Wong via email at [bill922@gmail.com](mailto:bill922@gmail.com) or (508) 320-5620. Classes begin September 20, 2015 at 5:30 pm in East Hall, for 1.5 to 2 hours each time. Through a special grant, FPU now only costs \$50 (a \$149 savings) per family for Wesley Church attendees in which the book "Total Money Makeover," workbook, audio CDs, and starter envelope system are provided. Child care will be provided, if needed.

For more information about Dave Ramsey and FPU, visit [www.daveramsey.com](http://www.daveramsey.com) and look for Financial Peace University under classes.

## RESTLESS? SEARCHING?

If you experience a spiritual hunger...

If you desire to bring a deeper dimension to your faith...

**we invite you to**

### COMPANIONS *in Christ*

A new small group that will provide support for your search

A path to explore prayer, scripture, and the spiritual journey

An experience of God's grace and love in daily times of reflection

Contact: Susan Williams at 508-795-7331 for more information.



*Companions in Christ* is...

- A small group of people praying together.
- An opportunity for daily individual reading and reflection.
- A focus on how you experience God.
- A group supporting your spiritual growth.
- A group reaching out to other Companions groups.
- An opportunity to learn various styles and forms of prayer.
- A record or journal of your walk with Christ.
- An invitation to let scripture form your faith.
- A time to reflect on where God is calling you and to affirm the gifts God has given you.
- A discovery of spiritual friends who will listen to and pray for you.

# NO-NONSENSE FAITH: Study on the letter of James



*“Theory does not necessarily produce practice just as science does not inevitably generate wisdom.”*

**(Scot McKnight)**

**All throughout the letter, James encourages all Christians to live a no-nonsense faith which practices what it believes. It addresses the abuse of the poor, the injustices of the rich, the trials of those who follow Jesus and what to do about them, and the need to show mercy to those in need.**

**The District Superintendent of the CMA District invites you to join him to discover the subversive message written by James, brother of Jesus; and how as believers we can become wiser and grow in our faith.**

We will study the entire book in several locations, learning the ins and outs of this unusual letter, which it was as challenging when James wrote it as it is today.

**The dates and locations for the BIBLE STUDY are:**

CHAPTER 1 -October 22- 9:30am, Oxford UMC, MA

CHAPTER 2- October 29- 9:30am, Milford UMC, MA

CHAPTER 3- November 5- 9:30am, Christ UMC, Wellesley

CHAPTER 4- November 12- 9:30am, Worcester, MA

CHAPTER 5- December 3- 9:30am, Centralville UMC in Lowell

For registration, directions or for any other information, please visit the website [www.neumc.org/cma](http://www.neumc.org/cma), email the district office at [cmadistrict@charter.net](mailto:cmadistrict@charter.net) or call 508-853-1895. (Drinks and snacks provided)

## John in Ultra-High Context: John 11:1-23

{notes from the Brewer Hall Study Group, July 26—August 2, 2015}

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### A Request to Save Lazarus, a Beloved Friend

(vv. 1-3) The author presupposes that the original audience knew the story of Jesus, of the parentless Judean siblings living in Bethany (Mary, Martha, and Lazarus), and the details of Mary's later anointing of Jesus' feet (12:1-7). Mary and Martha are noted as the focal females with the means and initiative to make large expenditures (12:1-7). Lazarus is likely a marriageable younger man who was seriously ill. Given the economic and social position of unattached women at this point in time, the pending death of their brother – the supporting male in their lives, would be especially devastating. That the sisters summoned Jesus at all indicates that they considered the illness terminal.

(vv. 4-6) Jesus' pattern of delay to requests from family or close friends (request, stalling reluctance, eventual compliance) was demonstrated previously (2:1-11; 4:46-54; 7:2-14). In keeping with this pattern, Jesus now enters the second stage of this pattern, and waits three days before coming to Lazarus' assistance. People were normally expected to fulfill the symbolic contract implied in friendship by dropping everything and going immediately when summoned (the "right" to immediate assistance). This passage is the narrator's explanation of what could be initially interpreted as potentially dishonorable behavior on Jesus' part. The explanation is threefold: (1) the ability to overcome death after three days (he arrives on the fourth day); (2) to bring honor (**glory**) to God; and (3) to gain honor (**glorification**) for Jesus. God's **glory**, a central motif in John's Gospel, is shared by the Son – God's broker, as derivative from God's.

### Reluctant Compliance: Decision to Rescue Lazarus from Death

(vv. 7-10) The light-darkness, day-night theme applies to the larger concern about **life** and death in this chapter. These polar oppositions are part of John's antilanguage. Light was considered inside persons, originating from the heart and shining outward through the eyes to enable sight. The verses also imply that those trying to stone Jesus would not do so openly, in the daylight.

(v. 11-16) Lazarus is called "our friend" – a relationship that Jesus later extends to all the disciples during his final words (15:14), and thus is designated as a group insider. In-group readers understand that death is only sleep for believers. Jesus will now demonstrate this for the benefit of his disciples' faith ("that you may believe"; v. 15).

The theme of death permeates this section of John's Gospel, and "**believe**" is a key UHC verb here. Thomas' nickname, "Twin", is first mentioned in v. 16 and twice more in later chapters (20:24; 21:2). In the ancient Mediterranean world, nicknames were commonly used to protect against the "evil eye".

### Arrival at Bethany and Confrontation with Sisters (I)

(vv. 17-23) The distance between Jerusalem and Bethany is cited in v. 18 as *stadíōn dekapénte* ("stadia fifteen"). One itinerary (walking) stadion equaled 157 meters, so 15 stadia would equal 2355 meters, or 1.46 miles.

Lazarus had been in the tomb four days (v. 17, repeated in v. 39). Some ancient Israelite scribes believed that a person's life force hovered near the cadaver for three days after death, finally departing on the fourth day.

The larger the group of mourners at the time of death, the greater the indication of family honor (v. 19). Mourning usually included loud wailing and beating of the breast (normally a female gesture, but sometimes also practiced by men at the time of a death). The sexes walked separately in the funeral procession to the grave. Afterward, the women returned home alone to begin a thirty-day period of ritual mourning, usually sitting on the floor (v. 20). Death was a process – not an instantaneous event. In Israel, the full process lasted one year.

Considering the above customs in the death process, the note that Martha leaves the village to meet Jesus is atypical behavior. The news that Jesus was in the vicinity must have spread via the gossip network.

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. 193-199.

## Did You Know?

In mid June Pastor Shandi and I (as lay member) attended the New England annual conference session held for the first time in its new venue in Manchester, NH. Did you ever wonder exactly what happens at Annual Conference? Each year across United Methodism an equal number of clergy members and lay members attend their conference's Annual Conference session, over which the resident bishop presides, for worship, fellowship, and to conduct the business of the conference. (In the United States alone there are 57 annual conferences.) During our time at Annual Conference this year, we heard reports of ongoing work; voted programs and budgets; and participated in inspiring and invigorating worship services.

Some of the decisions were related directly to matters of the conference such as approving the Camp and Retreat Ministry Strategic Planning Team's recommendation to close Covenant Hills Camp in Vermont. Also approved were the sales of the presently vacant episcopal residence and the Conference Center building in Lawrence. In addition we voted to accept a recommendation for six churches to be discontinued this year, including 3 in Massachusetts and one each in NH, Maine, and Vermont.

Our decisions were not limited to internal decisions about affairs of concern only to the church. Our first session was held the day after the shootings in Charleston, and one of our first acts after we were in session was to adopt a resolution condemning the act and including a call for pastors and local congregations to participate in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue about the need to speak against such violence in wider society.

Other resolutions which we approved during the course of the legislative sessions included a resolution on nuclear nonproliferation calling upon Congress to stop the Nuclear Complex and to devote the resulting savings to address pressing human needs such as affordable housing, public transit, healthcare and education. Another resolution which passed resolved to support the mission of the international educational organization Law Enforcement against Prohibition whose mission is to reduce the harmful consequences of the war on drugs and to lessen the incidence of death, disease, crime, and addiction by ending drug prohibition.

We also elected delegates to Jurisdictional and General Conferences, a process which is necessary only every 4 years. Our delegates will represent us at the 2016 General Conference an international body of nearly 1,000 delegates from all annual conferences around the world. It is the quadrennial General Conference which determines the content of our United Methodist *Book of Discipline*.

The jam-packed agenda made for long days, but we were sustained by powerful worship experiences designed and led by Dr. Marcia McFee of Worship Design Studio. Here at Wesley the theme of the sermon series in July based on Robert Schnase's book was passionate worship; I can attest from my experience of worship at annual conference that passionate worship is one of the factors that allows us to become the church for the world.

The opening worship service included an Act of Repentance with Native Peoples and the preacher Rev. Thom White Wolf Fassett, emeritus General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society reminded us that though we often speak of reconciliation and restoration, the Church rarely talks about repentance.

Celebrations of various ministries occurred in several of our worship services. Daughter of Wesley Gwen Arslan Puroshotham was among the members of the 2015 Class of Retirees who were recognized for their years of service to the church. At the other end of the spectrum our Friday evening worship service saw the ordination of two elders into full membership and commissioning of 10 people as provisional elders and one person as a provisional deacon. Finally our Saturday morning worship not only included anointing of Licensed Local Pastors and the Commissioning of a missionary but also recognized the varied gifts of laity serving in the general ministry of the church.

The theme of this year's annual conference was: Circle of Hope: Powered by Witness and Service. In his Episcopal address Bishop Devadhar enumerated some of the ways we in the church offer hope: by offering Jesus in new and compelling ways...by showing God's grace...by trusting God and allowing the Spirit to empower our way forward. He said that "When we come together as brothers and sisters in the faith, we become the circle of hope that God is counting on." Responding to the characterization of New England as a de-churched area he said, "... God is doing a new thing in our churches...[and]...offering us plenty of opportunities to invite others to partake in the extension work of the Reign of God."

I bring back to you the challenge which the bishop put forth for each and every pastor and local church to think about: how well and for what we are known in our local communities?

*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>
Mon., Aug 31	Wed., Sept 2
Mon., Sept 21	Wed., Sept 23

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.



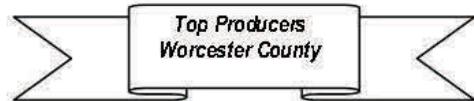
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**E-Mail: [office@wesleyworc.org](mailto:office@wesleyworc.org)**  
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**WESLEY HERALD**  
**AUGUST 5, 2015**

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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
- Events & Fellowship
- Layleader Deborah O'Driscoll
- Medical Ministry Ron Ramsay
- Memorial Gifts Carolyn Bellil
- Mission Coordinator Betsy Pennino
- Staff-Parish Relations Co-Chairs Brent Drajek Mark Muncey
- Youth Directors
- United Methodist Women Co-Chairs Barbara Ingrassia Allison Hansen