

# THE WESLEY HERALD

December 2022

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We live in a busy and rushed society. We rush from one thing to the next, then, in the end, many of us are restless and tired. Many stores have decorated for Christmas even long before Thanksgiving Day, and some of you have begun preparing for Christmas gatherings.

What is the rush? Are we really so eager to celebrate the season of Advent and Christmas? **Are we truly eager to celebrate the story of salvation and witness God's profound love and mercy to the world?**

Advent is a season of preparation, although it has come to be neglected in many places. The season of Advent is overshadowed by the holiday season as we move too quickly into celebrating Christmas. By the time that the actual solemnity of Christmas arrives, many of us are burned out. We are already tired of all the Christmas hype. Christmas has become anticlimactic. **What arrival are we waiting for?**

We have repeatedly heard the Christmas narrative in the Gospel: the journey made by Mary and Joseph from Galilee to Bethlehem, the miraculous birth, the shepherds, and the magi. These texts describing the events of Christmas are simple and easy to understand. Yet, these simple words are indeed profound words because they speak of a great mystery beyond human understanding. The Christmas narrative speaks of the divine humility that God chose to draw near to us that God chose to be born of a woman by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that God chose to subject Godself to pain and suffering. From Jesus' very birth into this world, he was associated with those who needed God's visitation. It was the poor and marginalized shepherds who were the first to experience God's graciousness through Jesus. We see the God-with-us, who satisfied the hungry, who raised the dead, and who after his crucifixion, rose over death.

Times and places may change over the years and things may look quite different than people did in Jesus' day. However, what does not change are people and circumstances. Despite improvement in both technology and thinking, there remains today, much to be changed about the world. There is still much lacking in preparing the way of the Christ among ourselves and in our own communities.

In this season, God comes to us in an incomprehensible yet tangible manner. In other words, the Christmas season is a privileged invitation to meet with Christ the Savior, and to welcome him into our lives. So this season is not just about preparing for the birth of Christ at Christmas, but for the Christ who is continually being born in our midst and transforming us ever more into his body in the world. In this sense, every Christmas season is new because from year to year we are drawn deeper into the mystery of Christ. Christmas is always new because as we grow and our lives change, we have new opportunities to experience God being born on earth as a salvific event that touches our lives in different and surprising ways. So, it is a season of joyful hope.

The questions are: **Is our hope really in Christ? Have we really allowed ourselves to wait in silence and ponder the great mystery of salvation? Have we been changed by our reflection on this mystery so that we live differently as our relationship with Christ deepens?** This season calls us to be attentive to the quality of our life in union with Christ.

However, it is so easy to be consumed by the hype of the holiday season: to decorate our houses for Christmas, to spend more time shopping than in prayer, and to host Christmas gatherings before the season has arrived. I know it is a challenge to remain faithful to the Advent and Christmas season when we are surrounded by a society which, while claiming to be Christian, does not take the time to reflect and prepare as God calls us to do.

As Christians, it is truly appropriate that we must celebrate this season differently. Through the lens of the Christmas narrative, we can look back on the past year and its difficulties and challenges and see beyond our worldly concerns to the message of hope and renewal that the newborn Savior brings. As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, we are able to see our losses, our illnesses, our sacrifices and sorrows in a new light. At the same time, we can appreciate the many joys and blessings God has given us throughout the year. We can certainly look forward to the many good things our Christ still has in store for us. And we are especially mindful of those among us who are in need, that they may not be deprived of anything in this joyful season.

I encourage you to remain faithful, to strive to enter into the spirit of the season with rich prayer and would like to offer two practical suggestions: It is our cultural norm not to discuss religion and politics even within a family. Many people consider them as private matters. You are preparing Christmas gifts for your children or grandchildren. But, as Christians, what would be the greatest present you can pass on to them? It is your faith, God-experience, prayer life, and the Word of God. Therefore, I urge you to persevere in passing on the faith to your children and grandchildren not with persuasion but with loving invitation of sharing together with much prayer for them.

The worship committee is concerned about attendance at Christmas Day service. Let me tell you a story. A long-expected baby was born. The parents were so delighted and gave a party. Many were invited, and all of them had a wonderful time. Few days later, a man who was not able to attend the party met one of the attendees, and asked, "Did you go to the party?" "Yes, it was one of the greatest parties I ever been." "How was the baby?" "Well, ... I have not seen the baby." I truly wish you are not like this one.

\* December 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

\* December 25<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 AM Christmas Service with Holy Communion

May our observance of this season renew us with joy and hope & the blessing of the Christ Jesus be upon each one of you!

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## Special Prayers for these Wesley Family, Friends, and Others...

Phyllis Yngve and family on the death of their sister, Cynthia JoAnn Yngve on November 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Bill Wong and family on the death of his grandmother, Frances Hsu., Laura Zoldak

Alicia Simoneau, Marilyn (friend of Margaret Watson), Alice & Joseph Boateng, Anne Burrows,

Barbara Fletcher, Cheryl Johnson (Phil Johnson's wife), Charles & Samira Kiefer, Bill Kilmer,

Kris (daughter of Lorraine Kronberg), Dorothy Norcross, David Samanen, Donald Tremblay,

Barbara Vietze, Bill Wong, Margie (Linda Keister's sister), Malika Gujarati (family of Jim & Judy Hoffman),

Emily (Donroy Ferdinand's cousin), Ralph (friend of Dorothy Adams).

Those who struggle with depression, anxiety, and alcoholism.

Jorge and Gloria Mendoza and Family would like to send special prayers to the Family of John E. Hermans who passed away November 26<sup>th</sup>. John and his family are good friends of the Mendoza Family. John and his family crossed paths with Wesley Church and the late Pastor Ned Watts when we invited them in for service, youth group, and Church basketball during the mid to late 80's.

## Tower & Rose Window Lightings & Altar Flowers

**The Tower lighting** for December is given in loving memory of Jean and Calvin Williams by Debbie, Gail and families.

**The Rose Window lighting** for December is given in loving memory of my parents, Henry and Katherine Williams by Susan J. Williams.

**The altar flowers today** are given in loving memory of my mother, Marjorie Merchant by Emily Smith.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Advent Devotionals** for Adults, Youth and Children are available to be picked up after church.

**Herald:** The next Herald will be sent out on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Please send your article(s) to me no later than Monday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Thank you.

**No Community Supper in December...** The last Saturday in December this year is New Year's Eve, so there will not be a community supper. We sometimes have switched to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday but that, of course, is Christmas Eve.

## Upcoming Hope for Housing Card Order Dates

Think ahead for those hard-to-decide gifts! Please let me know in advance of these dates if you have any large orders in mind. Card orders are to be submitted to Allison Hansen at [AChis4788@aol.com](mailto:AChis4788@aol.com) by end of day Tuesday, December 13 for pick up after church Sunday, December 18.

Don't forget we have much more than grocery cards available now -- T.J. Maxx, Amazon, Target and Starbucks gift cards were added recently, while continuing with Big Y, Stop & Shop, Shaw's, Dunkin' Donuts, Panera and CVS cards.

Please consider volunteering for card sales on Sundays -- one Sunday a month would be a great help!

*Allison Hansen*

**Thank You** to the Sunshine Girls for coming to my house and singing. I really enjoy the time with them and the time I get to visit with people.

*Joyce Sutherland*



### Christmas Wreath Dedications...

There is 1 wreath left available for dedication this holiday season. The cost of the wreath is \$12. If you'd like to dedicate a wreath in memory of a loved one or in celebration of someone, please reach out to me by email ([office@wesleyworc.org](mailto:office@wesleyworc.org)) or call the office and leave your name and number and I will return your call.

Thank you, Debi Reynolds

### Wesley Centennial Wall Calendar

Our church will soon be celebrating its one hundredth birthday! In April 1923 the parishes of Grace and Trinity Churches united to form Wesley Methodist Church of Worcester, Massachusetts.

In commemoration of this anniversary, the United Methodist Women are sponsoring the printing of special wall calendar for the year of 2023 featuring photos of our beautiful church building and its stained-glass windows. The calendar will be available later this fall for our members in time for Christmas, and the New Year.

**To reserve a calendar for yourself, please contact Margaret Watson** at [margikw@outlook.com](mailto:margikw@outlook.com), giving your name and contact information, phone and email address and number of calendars desired. The cost of each calendar is \$20.

We look forward to your support for the celebration and commemoration of the one hundredth birthday of our church!

*Margaret Watson, UWF*

### 2022 Silent Night Service

**December 20, 2022, 7 PM in person in Wesley sanctuary or online via worship links**

Are you seeking calm respite and time for reflection in the midst of the busyness of the season? For quite a few years one of the Advent worship opportunities beyond Sunday morning worship at Wesley has been the Silent Night service. This contemplative service arose out of the tradition of Blue Christmas, a recognition that there are people who are not in a festive mood of celebration during the Advent/Christmas season. Many of us find ourselves in need of quiet comfort and somber reflection. Even for those who are not particularly sad this service offers opportunity for a contemplative break from the noisy busyness that often leads up to Christmas. For the past two years this service has been online only with each of us worshipping from our homes but now we have the opportunity to return to the beauty of our sanctuary setting for this meaningful service. You may attend in person or worship online as this service unfolds in the beautiful sacred space that is our sanctuary. Please join us for a time of reflection with prayer, hymn singing, instrumental music, readings, candle lighting, and silence.

Each year one of the most meaningful and moving parts of the service is when worshippers come forward to light candles of hope and remembrance. People worshipping online are encouraged to create a worship center at home and participate by lighting your own candles (tea lights, votives, jar candles, etc. — whatever is meaningful and beautiful to you) at home. (Please remember to practice fire safety if you do so!)

This service is for all for who seek time and space to simply breathe and be still. Please join us either in person in the Wesley sanctuary or online (using worship links on church website) on Tuesday, December 20 at 7 PM.



## United Women in Faith Christmas Program

The Wesley United Women in Faith will host their Christmas Program on Saturday, December 3 at 12 noon. Following the holiday lunch, a presentation on antique wooden puzzles will be given by Robert Armstrong. A number of puzzles featuring Christmas and the winter season will be displayed. Robert, an international expert on wooden puzzles, has been featured on public television. He has also participated in several exhibits nationally. This presentation gives us an opportunity to view rare examples of an art no longer practiced but appropriate for the season. Remember the date! You won't want to miss this program!

*Margaret Watson for the Wesley UWF*

## A Message from Carty Cupboard...

A Big Thank You to Donna Hirtle and Chris Flagg and their team of volunteers for another successful Thanksgiving distribution! We were able to provide Thanksgiving dinner to 98 families this year thanks in part to the turkeys we received from the state, and a generous amount of high denomination gift cards from people who attend our area partner churches.

As 2022 draws to a close I would like to take a moment to thank each and every one of you who has given of themselves to help feed those in need by volunteering for Carty Cupboard. To Harry, Louie, Phil, Bill, Donna, Annie, Mark, Susan, Edith, Alana, Peggy, JoAnn, and Rick, I Thank You from the bottom of my heart. To each and every one of you who has continued to donate food and/or money to Carty Cupboard, I Thank You for your kindness.

Peace to You, Nancy

## God Moments

If you could share a story of seeing God's work in your life, please tell me or email it to me. The story can be anonymous or signed, and all are invited to participate. Betsy ([betspenn35@hotmail.com](mailto:betspenn35@hotmail.com))



*Susan Williams has been aware of many God Moments in her life, we've added another one for you to read:*

One December day, I took the Auburn Mall bus which went up Lincoln St., so I didn't have to change buses. On the ride home, it started to snow, and I could see the snow accumulating. A quiet voice in my head said, "Change buses." At the City Hall stop, I switched to the Belmont St. bus. When I got off near my apartment, it was very slippery walking, but the ground was flat the whole way home. If I had stayed on the other bus, I would have tried to climb the hill from Lincoln St. and might have fallen or been unable to get up the hill.



TV ads kept repeating that people on Medicare could get 8 free Covid tests kits. I ordered some and was waiting for the mail to bring them. One morning I felt ill and kept getting sicker. That day the Covid tests arrived! I was able to test myself and find out immediately that I tested positive for Covid.



### God Moments continued...

On Friday, Nov. 10, 1978, I came to Worcester to grocery shop. On my way home, I stopped at McDonalds for lunch. As I started eating in my car, I began feeling weird. My cheek was numb and I felt sick. I thought, "what is going on?" I heard in my head, "You are having a stroke." I said, "Not now Lord." He said, "Yes, now." What do I do?

I drove to my mom's house and said I was very sick and needed to go to the hospital. I heard someone go down the cellar stairs. It was the meter reader and I called for help. He came into my sight and asked, "What's the matter Sue?" It was Sam, the only person at Mass. Electric that I knew personally, and he knew exactly what to do. (God's perfect timing)

At Hahnemann Hospital, as I lay on the stretcher, a man came and held my hand, talking peacefully to me. He continued to do this in the ambulance, until we got to St. Vincent's. Then he left and I never looked to see who he was, but I knew God used the man for His purpose. And this was just the beginning of God's closeness during this whole experience. I will never forget how much God showed me He loved me, just as if I was His only child.

### Skinner Organ

This past summer three ranks of pipes and pipe chest in the pedal division left Wesley for refurbishment at Czelusniak et Dugal pipe organ company of Northampton, MA. This was work that needed to be done since little more than half of the pipes spoke while the others were dead. This unfortunate situation was caused by water leaks over eight years ago. Getting the restoration of this compound mixture stop was hampered for many reasons. This past year Wesley was awarded a grant for restoring this stop by the Fuller Foundation of Worcester. This foundation has been generous to many churches in Worcester to keep their pipe organs in good working condition. No foundation money is ever awarded for electronic organs since they have a short lifespan of service. You may or may not know but Worcester is home to many large pipe organs of which Wesley can count its Skinner organ as one of the outstanding instruments in Worcester. With foundation funds and generous member donations we were able to fully restore this stop and add to it so it is completely in the style of the Aeolian-Skinner company who installed this stop in 1957 under the dynamic leadership of G. Donald Harrison. Harrison is considered to be one of the greatest organ builders of the twentieth century. Under his leadership Aeolian-Skinner organs are revered for their outstanding tonal finishing and overall character. Now this stop is completed with four ranks and the former lowest rank has been assigned to be the independent 4' principal stop in the pedal division. All the existing pipes are shiny along with the added ranks of new pipes and the pipe sleeves are all new. While this stop is just next to my office it plays beautifully into the sanctuary capping off the pedal division. Our organ is officially now 75 ranks making it the grandest of all the organs on Main Street.

A heartfelt thank you to our contributors and the trustees for allowing this work to be done on our treasured Skinner organ! May this instrument continue to sing God's praises and lead us in spiritual worship each week as we gather in God's name.



This is a photo of the overhead cover that was built to protect the pipes from water damage.

## ADVENT GIFT BOXES OR BAGS

As an Advent mission this year at Wesley, you are again invited to create Advent Gifts of small, needed items. Please place items from the list below in a shoebox (or small Wesley UMC backpack, available on Sundays in Brewer Hall). There's no need to include a Christmas card since the gifts will be given out in January. That's because the last two Saturdays in December are Christmas and New Year's Eves, so there will be no December Community Supper. We're spreading the word of a January 8<sup>th</sup> Community Breakfast. You can bring to Brewer Hall your wrapped gift box (or backpack with tissue paper) by December 18<sup>th</sup>.

We have shortened the list below to include only the most needed gifts which are easily recognizable to folks from other cultures. Also, we found that the cans of fruits & vegetables were too heavy for homeless people and single serve cups were more usable. We think that reusable backpacks are helpful to homeless folks, while shoeboxes work for others. Please use shoeboxes (not boot boxes) and the gift is complete when the shoebox is full. *There's no need to include all items on the list.* Also add a plastic spoon & knife which a homeless person would need. Questions? Ask Betsy Pennino.

### Recommended Items:

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| *Toothbrush & toothpaste        | *Cereal bars                             |
| *Bar or small bottle of soap    | *Juice boxes or small juice bottle       |
| *Tissues, Antibacterial wipes   | *Single serve applesauce cups (pull-top) |
| *Wash cloth                     | *Goldfish or cheese crackers             |
| *Socks                          | *Dried fruit                             |
| *Gloves                         | *Hot cocoa packets                       |
| *ChapStick or lip balm          | *Canned tuna with pull-top               |
| *Band-Aids                      | *Meal in a can (pull-top)                |
| *Pens or pencils                | *Dark chocolate                          |
| *Tablet of paper/small notebook |  |

*“Christmas... a gladdening of hearts, a renewing of faith, a sharing of love.”*



### Supporting a Local School to Reduce Food Waste

On one of the Bishop's Days on the District, Bishop Devadhar talked to a MA school teacher who is working on including conversations on reduction of food waste into the middle school science curriculum in MA. I am sharing this information because I find it to be critical to work towards a reduction in food waste and composting what food scraps remain. Please take 2 minutes to add your support to a petition to get “food waste reduction” added with other sustainable practices in the Massachusetts science curriculum.

Did you know that reducing food waste is one of the most effective ways of fighting climate change but we waste 40 % of the food we produce in the US. Education matters - much of this food waste happens in our very own homes. Our students will waste less food with simple actions, when they know how much it matters! We need a show of support to bring it in front of the Department of Education and make this happen. Please forward this petition to your friends and family too.

You can learn more about the petition and impact of food waste in the announcements on our website or go to <https://www.lexingtongreenteams.org/advocate/fwcurriculum>.

## DID YOU KNOW?

During the Advent and Christmas season we decorate the church as well as our homes with various types of evergreens—plants that remain green throughout the seasons. These plants include not only pine and fir trees, but also holly and ivy. Because of their changeless nature, evergreens were viewed by ancient peoples with wonder and awe. Even before the time of Christ, the Romans considered evergreens to be symbols of peace, joy, and victory. Early Christians placed evergreens in their windows to symbolize the presence of Christ within the home.

Over the centuries specific meaning has come to be associated with the different varieties of evergreens:

- In ancient times cedar was the tree of royalty and was used for purification
- Laurel symbolizes victory
- The yew and cypress are symbols of eternal life
- Ivy has been used since the Middle Ages in decorating for Christmas—a symbol of love because of its tenacity and the way it clings as it grows
- Holly is considered a symbol of everlasting life as it puts forth its red berries even in the middle of winter. Holly also foreshadows the passion of Jesus: its prickly leaves are reminders of the crown of thorns and the bright red berries are symbols of drops of blood. In fact the Danish refer to the holly bush as “Christ thorn”. In addition, the holly bush is known for the bitterness of its bark and thus is a reminder of the bitter drink offered to Jesus on the cross.
- Even mistletoe is a symbol of Christ, the ancient Druids having noted that it remained green when the other trees were bare.

The arrangement of greens in the circle of a wreath, as with the Advent wreath as well as the other wreaths that hang in the sanctuary, is a symbol of the timelessness of the Eternal, as a circle has no beginning and no end.

Of course, as we prepare the sanctuary and our homes for the celebration of Christmas, the most important preparation we make is that of our hearts and souls as we worship together throughout Advent.

*Submitted by,  
Deborah O’Driscoll*




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