

WESLEY'S TWENTIETH ANNUAL HARVEST

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

OUR CONGREGATION IS OF MANY NATIONS
BUT WE WILL PRAISE HIS BOUNTIFUL HARVEST AS ONE

- SILENT AUCTION BEGINNING AT 9:30 am

- SANCTUARY SERVICE AT **10:00 am**
 - ★ KOFI AND AMA EVENT - Celebrate the day of your birth
 - ★ PRAISE AND CELEBRATION MUSIC
 - ★ HARVEST AUCTION
 - ★ APPEAL FOR FUNDS

- INTERNATIONAL LUNCH
 - ★ Bring a dish to share.



Wesley United Methodist Church
114 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608
508-799-4191 www.wesleyworc.org

WHAT IS HARVEST?

(Longer worship than we're used to, but shorter than a Red Sox or Patriot's Game!)

Harvest is an important tradition for our brothers and sisters from Ghana and other parts of the world. It is a day set aside to offer gifts of thanks to God. It is a day of rejoicing in God's goodness, and celebration of God's gifts in our lives. It is giving above and beyond our regular offerings, as we are moved to do so, out of gratitude for God's blessings in our life during this year.

What is Harvest: It is a time of the year, when farmers, fishermen, and hunters brought to church a portion of their harvest (their best) to church to be auctioned to raise the necessary funds needed to build their churches, and to do missionary work.

Auctions became necessary because of the limited availability of money in the Ghanaian economy in the early 20th century. Parishioners were encouraged to bring whatever they could, even if they had no money, so it could be sold, and the funds placed in the church coffers.

Why The Auction in the Sanctuary: Traditionally, the auction is characterized with the singing of hymns, praise choruses, and dancing. Remember, church members bring these items as a thanksgiving offering to God, for watching over them, and their households throughout the year. Church members buy these items at much higher prices than they would pay for them if they went to the marketplace -- all in the spirit of raising funds needed by the church for its' activities.

We invite all Wesleyans here to participate fully in all the activities of this year's annual harvest on Sunday, September 29, 2024. There are a variety of ways you can participate:

Kofi and Ama Offering ~ Do you know on what day of the week you were born? You will want to find out (find out on google or check to see the calendars in the Narthex) and plan to offer your special offering in the Basket for your day. To make it fun, we compete to see which day of the week is able to raise the most funds. The winner earns "humble bragging" rights.

Appeal for Funds ~ This is a tradition of call and response. The leader will ask all those who are prepared to make an offering of \$1,000 to bring (or dance) it forward as the choir sings. Then \$500, \$300, \$200, \$100, \$50 givers are invited to do the same! Those not wishing to make the amount of their gift known will also have a time to bring their envelopes forward with undesignated gift amounts. An "Appeal for Funds" envelopes will be included in your bulletin.

Silent Auction ~ There will also be items in Brewer Hall for persons to place a bid. Wesley's "silent auction" is a quiet, but fun way to 'bid' on or buy an item that has been donated by someone else. If you are the highest bidder, you pay to take that item home. You can bid on as many items as you wish. It is a different way to "harvest" items you may no longer need, and Wesley "reaps" the benefit for church and mission projects. Friendly donation ideas may include any new or gently used quality item of value that might be useful or bring joy to another. For example, a lovely vase, mirror, painting or other decorative or craft item would be greatly appreciated. Donating a gift certificate to a local restaurant, department or grocery store or tickets to the theater or a sporting event are always welcome. Gently read best-selling books, gift baskets of any variety, jewelry, fabric yardage for clothing or decorative use, or unique holiday items would be gratefully accepted. Offering to provide a service... an afternoon of yard work, a shopping trip, a catered meal for two or four, a delicious food item such as a cake, cookies, etc. for a special occasion are all wonderful contributions. Please bring your donation(s) to the church office on or before September 15th unless it is a perishable item. Provide information including your name, the item donated, its value and the minimal bid you think is acceptable. Appropriate items will be displayed at church on September 29th for all to bid on. If your item is not bid on it will be returned to you. We appreciate your help for such a worthy cause and don't forget to have fun!

Silent Auction will close 15 minutes after the service.

If you donate an item of substantial value, there is a form for you to complete in the Welcome Office. Please leave it and it will be returned to you once someone can sign it.

International Lunch ~ There will be a meal following the service. Everyone is invited. Please bring a dish from your family roots or a favorite dish to share.

The day will be filled with music, praise, testimony, preaching and plenty of opportunities to get up and move around if you need to do so.

We pray that you will be part of this multi-cultural worship service! Invite a friend! Come with an open mind, and money in your pockets, ready to join in the celebration of God's goodness! *To God be the Glory!*

BLESSING OF WATER

In our Biblical tradition, water plays an important role in God's salvation story. When the Israelites were delivered from captivity in Egypt, they crossed the waters of the Nile and the Red Sea into the dessert plain. When they were about to enter the promised land, the same Israelites crossed the waters of the Jordan into the lands of Canaan. From such experiences, water became an important sign of God's grace and gift of salvation, as our spiritual ancestors passed through the waters to enter into God's promises.

And now, in our Christian tradition, water remains a central symbol for entry into a new life with Christ. By water we are baptized just as Jesus himself received baptism in the waters of the river Jordan. Water, for us, becomes a symbolic recognition of God's grace and blessing in our life.

But more than a symbol in religious rite, water plays an important role even in our ordinary life. When we are conceived in our mother's womb, we are surrounded by water. Science even tells us that our bodies are made up of 50-75%¹ of water. And those who have been exploring for life in space are interested in water because we know that where there is water, there is life.

In societies and cultures that are dependent on agriculture for commerce and daily sustenance, water is a vital source of all that is living. For farmers to yield a fruitful harvest, good rains are a necessity. And so, in Ghanaian tradition, this glass of water comes before us to remind us of the blessing God gives through the good rains, which make any harvest possible. The glass of water that is now before us here in symbolic recognition of the gift that water is in all life.

Our harvest celebration opens with the auctioning of a glass of water. While we may bless this water, the focus is not on the water itself but on the harvest it yields. And for our celebration on this day, part of the harvest that this water yields is discovered in giving that result. Even though we may bless this water, we do not do so believing that God's blessing is for sale. Already we are blessed, for God's blessing is free and offered to all, just as the rains fall on the righteous and unrighteous.

By auctioning this glass of water, we believe that the one who buys this water is doing so for the privilege to open our ceremonies. The one who buys this water is ceremoniously given thanks on behalf of all of us for this gift. And when we pray for God's blessing on that one, we do so that they may be a means of grace for all of us during this harvest.

¹The amount of water in the human body ranges from 50-75%. The average adult human body is 50-65% water, averaging around 57-60%. The percentage of water in infants is much higher, typically around 75-78% water, dropping to 65% by one year of age.