

Sunday Announcements for December 8, 2024



December 4, 2024

“People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to God in heaven.”

— Matthew 5:15-16

Growing up in the Bickerton house meant attending church several times each week. For me, the season of Advent heightened the anticipation of going to church. Each week I could hardly wait for the lighting of the Advent wreath, both at home and in church.

From the viewpoint of a child, lighting the next candle on the Advent wreath meant we were one week closer to Christmas Day when the presents under the tree would be unwrapped and revealed!

From a developmental standpoint, however, Advent was a time for the most basic elements of Christian education to be emphasized, a time when the simple lighting of a candle focused on the basic concepts of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Each week another candle was lit, and another word was highlighted in song, liturgy, and sermon. And each week, these fundamental beliefs —the foundational pillars of everything we stand for and believe — were given voice and priority.

With the simple repetition of lighting these candles each year, my heart was primed to not only expect Christmas presents under the tree, but to also expect Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love as a simple way for me as a young person being raised in the Christian faith to live out those concepts every day. When it culminated with the lighting of the Christ Candle at the midnight Christmas Eve Service, the mission was accomplished — the implanting of a belief that God, through Christ, could bring new hope to a broken world!

Although the years have passed, the child in me remains. Time seems to pass much more quickly than it did as a young boy. Still, I find great satisfaction in lighting a new candle each week and reminding myself that, with God’s greatest gift as my greatest inspiration, I believe there is a pathway to follow “the way, the truth, and the life” as a model for living.



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And when the Christ Candle is lit once again on Christmas Day, my heart continues to be warmed by the glow of knowing that during this perilous journey I am never alone.

I have found myself in a very reflective and sober mood this Advent season. Oh, trust me, my hope has not waned. Neither has my child-like spirit of innocence and wonder. What has changed is the world around me.

There is a heightened sense of anxiety that invades these quiet, holy nights of Advent. Uncertainty over what lies ahead clouds these crisp starry nights. Issues that separate us make it more challenging to kneel at the manger with other siblings. The rhetoric of the world creates a wind that threatens to blow out even the simple tenets of our faith.

It seems to me that these are days where our light needs to be more than just a flickering candle, that, from a distance, is hard to identify. These are days when our faith calls us to create a blaze of Hope, a beacon of Peace, a spotlight of Joy, and a sunburst of Love.

Christian friends, this is our moment, our time, to let our light shine before others that they can see undeniably what good works can do and what giving God glory really looks like.

The ritual of lighting candles at Advent is not a shallow exercise. It begins the Christian year with a clear reminder that God so loved the world Jesus came to provide the best example of how to find beloved community amid our challenges.

It acknowledges, with the lighting of a simple candle once a week, that God is still in our midst, still calling us to be the body of Christ “until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.”

There is, in this simple weekly act of worship, an opportunity to bolster the foundations of our faith through the message of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. It implants in us and others that God, through Christ, can bring hope to broken world.

Let your light of witness shine bright this Advent season, dear friends! Keep your candles lit and your witness alive! And through it all, always remember that Christ walks with you each step of the way!

The Journey Continues, . . .

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas J. Bickerton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop
New Hope Episcopal Area
New England & New York Annual Conferences

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

Ruth Wentzell (friend of Elaine Peterson), Sandra O'Driscoll, Melissa Houlihan (friend of Bill Robbins), Alice Douglas, Deborah Plant, Barbara McLaren, Cathy (sister-in-law of David Potts), Rich Reynolds, Grace Woode, Beverly Grimshaw, Rosamond Hammond, Linda Keister, Pinamang Boateng, Joseph Boateng, Stephen Boyns, Anne Burrows, Dot Ellis, Barbara Fletcher, Tom Friend, Jim & Judy Hoffman, Don Johnson, Charles Kiefer, Dorothy Norcross, David Samanen, Janet Terzian, Donald Tremblay, Barbara and the Vietze Family; Peter Woodcock, Laura Zoldak, Susan (friend of David Potts), Margie (Linda Keister's sister), Page (Allison Hansen's sister), Libby T. (friend of Phyllis Yngve), Neil Ashton (past member), Paula and Calvin Kelly (sister and brother-in-law of Linda Dylewicz), Those who struggle with depression, anxiety, and alcoholism.

Tower & Rose Window Lightings & Altar Flowers

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

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

The altar flowers today are given in loving memory of my mother, Marcia Zwiép, for her 100th birthday on December 7th, by Donna Zwiép Williams.

Announcements

AN ALL-CHURCH MEETING IS TODAY FOLLOWING WORSHIP!

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Tuesday, December 24th at 6 PM

Upcoming Vacation... Debi will be on vacation on Tuesday, December 24th and Tuesday, December 31st.

A Christmas Lunch will be held on Sunday, December 15th following worship. Please bring a dish or dessert to share.

Advent Devotionals for adults, youth, and children are now available in the Narthex. Please stop by and take one. There are also Advent Coloring calendars available.

Christmas Wreath Dedications...

There are 6 wreaths available for dedication this holiday season. The cost of each wreath is \$14 each. 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) or call the office (508-799-4191 xt 102) and leave your name and number and I will return your call. *Debi*



ADVENT GIFT BOXES OR BAGS

For Advent this year at Wesley UMC, you are again invited to create Advent Gifts of small, needed items. These will be given out with the December 28th Community Supper, as a gift to our neighbors in need.

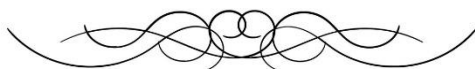
Please place items from the list below in a wrapped shoebox. The gift is complete when the shoebox is full (no need to include everything on the list). Please bring your wrapped gift box to Brewer Hall by December 22nd.

Recommended Items:

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

Questions? Please ask Sandra Toffay (stoffay@gmail.com) or Bertha Amoako (berthaamoako79@gmail.com).

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



From Carty Cupboard Food Pantry...

In the month of December, we now have an urgent need for canned fruit.

To everyone who continues to support the mission of Carty Cupboard Food Pantry we appreciate your kindness. Thank You & Merry Christmas!

Nancy

January 2025 Herald: *There are extra copies of the Herald in the Narthex by the Welcome Office.*

The January Herald will be part of the January 5th bulletin. The deadline for articles is Thursday, December 26th at 11 am. Since the following week is a very short week, I will not have time for late articles. Thank you for your cooperation.

Debi

Gift Cards Can Prevent Homelessness!

Do you buy groceries? Stop by CVS? Grab a coffee at Dunkin, Starbucks or a meal at Panera? If you do, pay with a gift card instead of cash or credit. Buy your card at Wesley and your purchase will help a family threatened with homelessness actually remain in their home.

Allison Hansen will be selling cards in Brewer Hall after church on the following dates and will accept orders by email at ACHis4788@aol.com. Please give her advance notice if you want to place a larger order.

December 8 – Secret Santa? Team gifts? Last chance for larger orders this year.

GOD MOMENT

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)

God Moments from Betsy Pennino

We both have been moved by seeing woods where just one tree has Christmas lights, so we've been decorating one evergreen in the woods behind our house. We always put two strings of lights around the very top to create a sense of starlight. Bruce put the lights on in 2023 and then I went out to look at them.

I saw the usual jumble of lights & wires near the top. Yet when I looked out after dark, the jumble had become a perfect 5-point star! And it stayed there for weeks while other strings of lights were jostled about by strong windstorms.

I often notice the hazy colors that are created by sunlight streaming through Wesley's stained glass. They appear on the balcony wall to the left of the chancel. On November 3rd, I noticed more blue than usual as we started the readings for communion. I went forward to receive communion and returned to my seat. Immediately I looked up and saw that the blues had organized into two stripes. They extended almost the width of the wall. Above the left side of the stripes was a red field with a burst of gold in it. An American flag with blue instead of red & white stripes, red where the blue field with stars usually is, and a flash of gold instead of the 50 stars. It was two days before the 2024 election, and I had hopes for what the meaning might be. Later, I decided it was a sign that God would still bless the United States of America. Did anyone else observe this?