

Sunday Announcements for January 19, 2024



January 13, 2025

Reclaiming the Authentic Work of our Church

The movie “Conclave” has recently captured my attention. This is the story of a Roman Catholic Cardinal who finds himself immersed in the discovery of conspiracies while overseeing a conclave to elect a new Pope.

The film has as much to say about the struggles, perceptions, and realities facing the institutional church in all denominations as it does about conspiracies related to a papal election.

When a Pope is to be elected, Catholic Cardinals from around the world gather in Rome for a “conclave.” The selection process is highly secret, and culminates when the approved majority vote is reached, and a plume of white smoke emerges from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel.

In one scene the Cardinals feel the ground rumble. The head of the conclave, the dean of the College of Cardinals, is informed that a bomb has exploded in Rome. In response, the Dean says, *“You must say nothing to the Cardinals. We are sequestered and they must be shielded from all news that may influence their judgement.”*

Several minutes later, the Dean is approached with more information about the incident. His response is similar: *“I too must be shielded from any knowledge which could act as an interference in the process of this conclave.”*

Only minutes later, another bomb explodes just outside of the Sistine Chapel where the vote is being taken; the Cardinals can no longer ignore the outside world as shattered glass falls on the Cardinals themselves.

This point cannot be denied – no matter how long you attempt to shelter yourself from the realities of the world, those realities will eventually explode into your consciousness and that of the church.

This is not a time for the Church of Jesus Christ, United Methodist or otherwise, to be “sequestered” from news that may influence our work. This is not a time for the church to be focused solely on its internal issues and challenges. We’ve done enough of that in the last decade. This is not a time for the church to emphasize its organization, or protocols and practices, many of which have grown irrelevant and out of touch.



Bishop's Office

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Today there are thousands who have been displaced by wildfires. The images are horrific. Others are shivering in the bitter cold of winter without a safe and warm place to lay their head. There are others enduring sleepless nights, wondering how changes in immigration laws may affect them and their families. The threats of war, mass shootings, and violence loom. The list is seemingly endless.

From its inception, the beauty of our Wesleyan theology is found in its wonderful integration of word and practice. We cannot fully embrace what it means to be a Methodist without finding clear and concrete ways to translate what we “say,” into a practice of what we “do.” Even though the temptation and, at times, the practice of 21st-century United Methodists is to turn inward, the true essence and calling of United Methodism is to “hit the ground running” with acts of kindness, love, charity, and outreach.

And it is important to be able to act quickly, nimbly, and effectively when the outside world “blows out the windows” and calls the church to act. When the ember of a fire destroys a home, when the biting cold threatens a life, when the sound of a bullet races through the air, there is no time to talk, protest, or even legislate. It is time to act.

The perception of today’s church is that it is more concerned about its “conclaves” than its purpose. We are being lulled to sleep amid our internal debates. It could be argued that we have left our wheelhouse, our calling to think more of others than we do of ourselves. Our mission is not to just keep existing disciples, but to find new and relevant ways to make them.

And when it works, there is light in the darkness, a voice in the wilderness that creates an “aha!” moment that changes and transforms. This is our work.

In the Gospel of Mark, we read these words:

“Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff: no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, ‘Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.’ So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.”

Funny, it doesn’t mention anything about a conclave.

The Journey Continues, . . .

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Bickerton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop
New Hope Episcopal Area

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

Carolyn Bellil, Debbie Plant, 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, 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.

Ivy Hammond and family on the death of her father, Captain Isaac Eshun Famiyeh on January 7th. Cards can be sent to Ivy at 163 June Street, Worcester, MA 01602.

Debi Reynolds and family on the death of her cousin Tommy on January 16th. He is the son of her aunt/godmother who just passed away. Please hold close in prayer their family and especially her Uncle Tom, father and husband, during this difficult time.

Tower & Rose Window Lightings & Altar Flowers

The Rose Window lighting for January is given in loving memory of Mrs. William B. Smith by the United Women in Faith.

The Tower lighting for January is given in loving memory of my parents, Mary & Norman Fletcher, and my brother, David Fletcher by Barbara Fletcher.

Announcements

AN ALL-CHURCH MEETING

will be held on Sunday, January 19, 2025, following worship.

Gently Used/New Coats, Hats & Gloves are Needed

Do you have a gently used winter coat that you no longer wear? We are collecting gently used or new coats, hats and gloves for the people who come to the monthly Sunday Breakfast. During this season of giving let us help keep our neighbors warm. *Thank you, Linda D'Acri*

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

The February Herald will be part of the February 2nd bulletin. The deadline for articles is Monday, January 27th at 11 am. Thank you for your cooperation. *Debi*

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR IHN (IN HOUR OF NEED)

*Sheri Linn, Program Director of IHN, will be at Wesley on January 19th
and will be speaking during church about their program.*

IHN works in partnership with The Faith Community, groups and individual volunteers to provide shelter and assistance to families with children who are experiencing homelessness. They house up to six families, located at 91 June Street in Worcester.

We are looking for volunteers for 2 shifts for the week of January 26th – February 1st, Sunday – Saturday, time slots:

Evenings 5:30 – 8:30 pm ****Start time has been corrected.****

Overnights 8:30 pm – 6:30 am (a room is provided for you)

You can sign up in Brewer Hall on the bulletin board under “Mission”. Please provide your name and phone number for contact.

Please contact me for more information or with any questions. *Gerard Piscitelli (774-253-7362)*

From Carty Cupboard...

In the month of January, we need strawberry or grape jelly, and oatmeal in the variety packages please. Thank you to everyone who continues to purchase food for Carty Cupboard.

Thank you, Nancy Spencer

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.

January 26 - plan for Valentine's gifts! ❤️ February 23

March 16 - stock up now for Easter baskets!

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 Moment from Betsy Pennino...

The first thing I did on New Year's Day was to look out the window. I saw 10 robins feasting on the red berries of our winterberry bush right under the window. As the saying goes, "one robin does not a spring make," but 10 robins? Surely, they could be a sign of something good to be expected!

Many people believe that robins are often used as messengers sent by the divine and angels to remind people that they are not alone. The robin, the sign of an angel, reminds us to have faith and trust in our future.

The original quote was from Aristotle, one of the ancient Greeks-- "One swallow does not a summer make."