
THE WESLEY HERALD

December 2025



From the Pastor's Desk

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

— John 1:5 (NIV)

Dear Wesley UMC family,

This is my first Advent with all of you here at Wesley UMC and in Worcester, MA, and I am grateful to begin this holy season together. Advent is a time of **waiting, watching, and hoping**—and already, I have seen God's light in this community through your kindness, prayers, and smiles. I look forward to sharing this journey of hope with you, as we watch for Christ's light in our lives and in the world around us.



December is here, and we are walking together through the season of Advent. Advent begins in darkness, but it is not a scary time. It is a **holy, hopeful darkness**—a time of watching, waiting, hoping, and noticing God's light even in small ways.

Our Advent theme this year is **"Watchful Hearts, Hopeful Lives."** This means we try to keep our hearts open to God and live each day with hope.

Hope does not mean everything is easy. Hope does not mean we ignore our problems. Hope means we **trust that God is with us, even in difficult times.**

Just last Saturday, at our Community Thanksgiving Dinner, I was so blessed that **twenty volunteers from our church came to be with folks from around the community.** Some of you served food with smiles; some interacted with friends and new friends. Some helped with setup and cleanup and security. I thank God for all of you! Moments like these remind us that God's light shines through small acts of service and love.

This month, I invite you to practice one simple thing: **Pay attention.**

Pay attention to someone helping a friend. Pay attention to a kind word from a neighbor. Pay attention to a moment of peace in your home. Pay attention to the feeling in your heart when you pray. These small moments are ways God speaks to us.

At Christmas, God comes quietly—as a baby, in a simple place, to ordinary people. This reminds us that **God often comes in small and gentle ways today, too.**

As we move through December, may we continue to be a church with hearts that watch for God and lives that shine with hope. May we notice these moments of light and share them with others, so Christ's hope shines through all we do.

May Christ's peace be with you and your loved ones now and always.

With love and blessing,

Pastor Nizzi



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

Earl Flagg, Susan Williams, Udem Ukpog (Enoh's husband), John O'Driscoll, Debbie O'Driscoll, Bishop Tom Bickerton, our DS Megan Stowe, Pastor Nizzi, Pastor Nory Leachon and Mayela, Stacey Nichols-Byll and her daughter Mali, Shawanna, Justin Bacon, Tim Murphy, Pinamang Boateng, Joseph Boateng, Stephen Boyns, Anne Burrows, Janice Capen, Janet DeNapoli, Xuan Diep, Alice Douglas, Dot Ellis, Barbara Fletcher, Beverly Grimshaw, Rosamond Hammond, Linda Keister, Charles Kiefer, Sandra O'Driscoll, Debbie Plant, Troy Potts, Shea Pugh, Rich Reynolds, David Samanen, Janet Terzian, Donald Tremblay, Barbara Vietze, Grace Woode, Peter Woodcock, David Patrick, Kathleen Herbert, Francis Mosso, Troy and Cathy Potts, Melissa Houlihan, Robert Craft, Susan, Page, Libby T., Paula and Calvin Kelly, Those who struggle with depression, anxiety, and alcoholism.

Worship Attendance

November 9 – 88 November 16 – 116 November 23 - 108 November 30 - 115

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.

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

Altar Flowers... If you'd like to order altar flowers in honor, celebration or memory of a loved one, come to the Welcome Office and sign up in the book. Please take a form to complete and return it to the office with your payment. It's \$80 for both arrangements on the altar (\$40 per arrangement), or a single arrangement for \$50. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you, Debi Reynolds

YEAR END REMINDERS!

As December comes to a close, please remember the following with regard to your 2025 donations:

- In order to post your donation to 2025, checks need to be dated 2025. Any check dated 2026 will be posted to next year.
- All donations for 2025 should be postmarked or received in the office by 12/31/2025. If a check is received in the church offering and it is dated in December, but not put in the offering until January, it will be credited to 2026.
- Once December deposits have gone to the bank and all accounts are reconciled, I will send statements out by the end of January. You will have one week to notify me of any corrections before I begin the statistical report for the New England Conference.

Thank you for your support. Wishing you a happy holiday season and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Matt Crane

Keeping You Connected!

Wesley UMC Prayer Circle, Wednesdays from 12-1 pm in Mary Ellis Lounge. A church family that prays together stays together. Come as you are! Led by Pastor Nizzi.

Advent Bags... This year the mission committee has decided to do advent bags rather than multiple sizes of boxes. We have purchased the bags which you may pick up after church any Sunday from Gbemi, Sandra Toffay, Maria or Linda.

Instead of multiple items this year we decided to put in SOCKS, A KNIT HAT, GLOVES OR MITTENS, and a CHOCOLATE TREAT. Thank you so much and hopefully we will make this a huge success!!



Handbell Program... The Wesley Music Ministry announces the formation of a formal Handbell program and is looking for anyone interested in participating in this exciting ministry. Rehearsals will be held in Brewer Hall on Wednesday evenings, beginning January 7, with the goal of playing in worship at least once per month. If you are interested in joining, please contact David Potts at david@wesleyworc.org.

UWF's Annual Christmas Party - Saturday, December 13 at 12 pm will be UWF's Annual Christmas Party. Come for lunch and enjoy our speaker – Karen Spencer, Executive Director of Girls on the Run Worcester County. This local chapter of a national afterschool organization inspires girls to be joyful, healthy, and confident using a fun, experience-based curriculum that creatively integrates running. *Bring a friend! All UWF meetings are open to any woman of faith.*

The December Community Dinner will be held on December 27th. Please join us for Pasta and meatballs, salad, bread & butter, dessert, and beverages.

Ghanaian Watch Night Service, December 31 at 10:00 pm... You are invited to join us for this Watch Night worship service to ring in the new year. The service includes the singing of Ghanaian prayers, and a message. The service begins at 10:00 pm and will conclude by 12:15 am.

January 2026 Herald: The next newsletter will be in January 4th bulletin. The deadline for articles is December 29th. There will not be a February newsletter.

Thank you, Debi



Christmas Wreath Dedications... There are 6 wreaths available for dedication this holiday season. The cost of each wreath is \$20 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 and leave your name and number and I will return your call. Thank you, Debi Reynolds

Volunteers Needed for Poinsettia Delivery... Now that the Poinsettia's are ordered, it's time to find some volunteers to help deliver the plants to shut-ins after church on Sunday, December 21st. If you have some time and can deliver one or two plants, please email me (office@wesleyworc.org) or call me in the office at 508-799-4191, ext 102. Thank you, Debi

Worship Through Carols

December 28, 2025 10AM

What is your favorite Christmas Carol?

Write the title of your favorite carol on the back of your attendance slip.

**We will sing the 6 most popular carols during worship on December 28th!
Let's celebrate together through song and joy!**



Image: pinterest.com

Christmas Trees at Wesley

The "Mitten" Tree in Brewer Hall - Please help decorate this tree with new warm hats, gloves, scarves and/or mittens. The lovingly created hats, mittens, and scarves are also appreciated. These practical ornaments bring happiness to those who enjoy seeing their variety and color and the needy Carty Cupboard clients who will receive and enjoy their warmth.

The "Member" Tree in East Hall - It is our hope that all families in Wesley Church will have a symbol - some ornament of their choice - among the decorations on this tree. If your family is not represented, please bring one and add it to our interesting and varied collection. (There are hangers under the tree.) All ornaments are carefully packed and stored so that they may be displayed annually.

Chrismon Christmas Tree at Wesley... The Chrismon Tree has graced Wesley's sanctuary at Christmas time since 1983. The ornaments are symbols of Jesus and Christianity. Each one was handmade. Why are these symbols called Chrismons? What is the meaning of each Chrismon? Who lovingly made them for our tree? What is the origin of a Chrismon Christmas Tree? Under the tree you will find a brochure that answers these questions. Please take a close-up look at our tree, take a brochure and learn about Wesley's Chrismon Christmas Tree.

COMPANIONS *in Christ*

Submitted by Susan Williams, Leader

Companions in Christ at Wesley United Methodist Church was established in 2001. The inaugural group was facilitated by Susan Proux and included four participants: Lorraine Kronberg, Barbara Ingrassia, Gail, and me.

During the 27th week of that first study, we discerned that the experience was profoundly meaningful and that it should be shared more widely within the Wesley community. After prayerful reflection, I felt God calling me to continue the ministry. Though unsure of my qualifications, I sensed God's assurance: "You are not going to do this alone." With that guidance, I stepped forward to lead.



Since that time, I have facilitated the full 28-week Companions in Christ study annually until the onset of COVID-19. Beginning in 2010, I also offered shorter 9- and 10-week companion groups, meeting monthly. As participants completed the 28-week program, they were invited to join the larger fellowship group.

Over the years, approximately thirty individuals have taken part in Companions in Christ, including: Caroly Bellil; Debbie O'Driscoll; Barbara Hunt; Susan Richards; Chris Flagg; Joan Decept; Lucy Simoneau; Jean Devali; Sandy McManus; Earl Flagg; Greg Decept; Gladys Adu-Poku; Alice Boateng; Lucy Annan; Linda D'Acri; Donna Hirtle; Janice England; Mercy Peacock; Cordelia Ferdinand; Judith Barton; and Marilyn Baptist.

This fall, the Tuesday morning group includes Veronica Winder, Jacki Wetton, and Linda D'Acri (who is joyfully engaging with the study again). The evening group includes Cordelia and Danielle Ferdinand.

Each gathering begins and ends with prayer, and I pray individually before every meeting for God's guidance. Confidentiality is emphasized to create a sacred space for sharing, listening, and spiritual growth. I host the ministry in my home, and I continue to do so because it brings me deep joy. We learn from one another, and the fellowship strengthens our walk with Christ.

By God's grace, Pastor Nizzi and I are planning a reunion gathering in late spring to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Companions in Christ ministry at Wesley UMC.

This is the Opening Prayer every time we gather:

Light of Christ, shine on our path. Chase away all darkness and lead us to the heart of God. Amen.

ONECALL TELLALL

Don't sit and wonder on a Sunday morning if a storm or if church is going to be cancelled. Instead, receive a phone call and find out immediately! Whether it be a cancellation because of a snowstorm, a meeting that has been cancelled or even to remind you of a special event taking place at Wesley, we will reach out to you by phone. This is a pre-recorded call, so please make sure your voicemail has space and it should save the call in case you miss it.

If you would like to sign up for this, please put your name, home phone number and ***one phone number per household*** on the sign-up sheet just outside the Welcome Office.

This is just another way for us to help keep you informed of what is going on at your church.

God Moment

A God Moment from Jean Grant

In late fall of 2020, I was making my way through the grocery store—one that I typically didn't go to. But it was closer and convenient. And our family had been going through a stressful health crisis (my husband had been in the hospital), so I needed to grab a few groceries and return home quickly. As I was following the arrows and lines with my shopping cart (it was the pandemic days, after all), I bumped into an acquaintance I hadn't seen in ages. Our sons went to preschool together, and Sue and I would see each other at social gatherings but it had been years.

Pandemic aside, I was still grappling with the realization of sending my oldest son to high school. Should he stay public or go private? Where? Which is best for his needs? I had been racked with indecision for a year. He is autistic, and I was worried about the environment and programming of the local public high school. Sue and I got talking and she was telling me about the private Catholic high school her oldest was attending—and how much she loved it. To her, it felt “right.” It was a school on my list to check out, but I always pushed the thought away with excuses or justifications—the cost, the distance, the all-boy factor, will they approve of his special accommodations? The deadline for the application fast approached, so I went home and prayed upon it. And applied.

Seeing Sue on that day, while I was in a season of indecision and unrest, was a God Moment. God brought me to the lesser-visited store, to bump into Sue. God put that little whisper in my mind: this is the school for your son(s).

Four years later, as Ewan graduated from Saint John's, I could not have been more grateful for that fleeting yet life-changing moment with Sue in the grocery store. My sons have both blossomed at the school. Even now, I still send heavenward a prayer of gratitude for that day with Sue in the grocery store while Ewan embarks on another adventure: college.



DID YOU KNOW?


This past Sunday we began our observation of the liturgical season of Advent with the lighting of the first candle on the Advent Wreath. The custom of the Advent Wreath originated centuries ago in Northern Europe and was associated with a household tradition of burning lights during the Yule season. By the sixteenth century these became Advent symbols in Christian homes, but the use of the Advent Wreath as a symbol of the season in worship is a phenomenon of the last fifty years or so.

Did you know that in the early stages the candles of the Advent Wreath were white or red? Gradually a color scheme for the candles evolved which is based on the liturgical use of color. Our Advent Wreath has three purple candles and a pink candle in the outer circle of the wreath with a larger white candle in the center. Since Advent is a season of preparation, it has aspects which are both solemn and penitential. This is symbolized by the use of a deep purple (or in some traditions a deep blue) color, which also is the color of royalty, passion, and longing, for the first, second and fourth candles of the Advent Wreath. Advent also is a season of expectant waiting, a more joyous aspect of the season symbolized by the use of a pink candle for the third Sunday. Finally, on Christmas Eve we light the Christ candle in the center of the wreath. The white color of the Christ candle is a symbol of festivity.


Advent is a season in which we mark the passage of time—not only the waiting for our celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas but also preparing for his final coming at the end of time. The Advent Wreath helps us to mark that passage of time: as we watch the candles diminish in size we also see the accumulation of light. The gradual increase of light as a new candle is lit each Sunday reminds us of the approach of the Light of the World.

Submitted by,
Deborah A. O'Driscoll





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