

THE WESLEY HERALD

January 2026



From the Pastor's Desk

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine..."

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

— Isaiah 43:1, 18–19 (NRSVUE)

Dear Siblings in Christ,

The beginning of a new year often invites reflection. We look back on what has been—moments of joy and gratitude, seasons of challenge and loss—and we look ahead with a mixture of hope, uncertainty, and prayer. **Into that space, God speaks a word that is both tender and steady: "Do not fear... you are mine."** Before God calls us forward, **God reminds us of who we are and whose we are.**



The past year has not been the same for everyone. Some carry gratitude for blessings received; others carry weariness, grief, or unanswered questions. God does not dismiss those experiences. Isaiah reminds us that **God has been present through every "water" and "fire" we have walked through. God's promise is not that we will be spared from difficulty, but that we will never walk alone.** God has been faithful in the year behind us, even in ways we may only recognize later.

Then comes the invitation that feels especially fitting for January: **"I am about to do a new thing." This is not a call to forget the past or pretend it didn't shape us. Rather, it is an invitation not to let yesterday define what God can do today. God's future is not limited by our history.**

As a Wesley UMC family, we enter this new year trusting that **God is already at work among us.** New beginnings do not always arrive with loud announcements or dramatic changes. Often, **God's "new thing" begins quietly—in renewed compassion, deeper listening, small acts of faithfulness, and a willingness to say yes to where the Spirit is leading. Our call is not to have the year perfectly planned, but to stay attentive and open.**

We are deeply grateful to all who made our Advent and Christmas season so special. **Pastor Joseph Wilson, Gifty Bentum-Asante, Ivy Hammond, Mercy Agyemang, and the Ghanaian Choir** led the Watch Night Service, with nearly one hundred filling the Chapel. I was especially blessed to worship with my family—my siblings Reah, Emil, Beulah, and Noel; my brother-in-law, Rev. Tim Atwater; and my niece, Rohi.

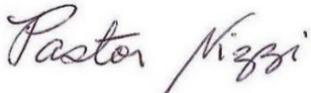
Thank you!
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

Rhianna Burke organized the Gardner Cinema viewing of *David*, with nearly one hundred attending on December 20. **Ronna Davis and David Potts** hosted the Chancel Choir Christmas Party, and David Potts also launched our **new Bell Choir**, adding a joyful new dimension to our worship. **Debi Reynolds and Matt Crane** organized the Staff Christmas Party. **Linda D'Acri** created the beautiful Advent & Christmas sanctuary decorations, with help from **Maria, Judith, Louis, and Phil** for the poinsettias.

Our gratitude also goes to **Maria Gorsuch-Kennedy, Chris Flagg, Evette Walters, and the more than twenty volunteers** who serve the Carty Cupboard Food Pantry, and to **the D'Acri family, Judith Barton, and Autumn** for the Christmas Community Dinner, where guests received a Christmas bag provided by **Friends of Wesley**, led by Gbemi, Sandy, and Maria. Thank you all for your generosity, service, and love—your efforts make our church a true family of faith.

My prayer for this new year is simple: **that we will walk forward together with trust**. That we will continue to be a community shaped by grace, rooted in love, and guided by hope. **Whatever this year holds, we begin it with confidence—not in ourselves, but in the God who calls us by name and is always making a way.**

Grace and peace,



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

Debi Reynolds, Wabbey, Barbara Ingrassia, Earl Flagg, Susan Williams, Udeme Ukpong (Enoh's husband), Bishop Tom Bickerton, DS Megan Stowe, Pastor Nizzi, Pastor Nory Leachon and Mayela, Stacey Nichols-Byll and her daughter Mali, Shawanna, Justin Bacon, 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, David Samanen, Janet Terzian, Donald Tremblay, Barbara Vietze, Grace Woode, Peter Woodcock, David Patrick, Kathleen Herbert, Francis Mosso, Troy & Cathy Potts, Melissa Houlihan, Robert Craft, Susan, Page, Libby T., Those who struggle with depression, anxiety, and alcoholism.

Worship Attendance

December 24 – 143, December 28 – 113, January 4, 2026 – 127

Lightings & Altar Flowers

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

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

The altar flowers today are given in loving memory of Mrs. Isabelle Smith by the United Women in Faith.

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

Keeping You Connected!

A message from SPRC

Please keep Debi Reynolds in your prayers as she prepares to have surgery next week. Debi expects to be out of the office for 4-8 weeks while she recovers.

In the meantime... **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

We need a volunteer to assist with answering phones on Thursdays and Fridays.

Veronica Winder has agreed to cover as many of the office responsibilities as she can during the time Debi's out. This means the church will continue to be open Tuesday – Friday, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm. Veronica has worked in a church previously and we are confident that together with her previous experience and your assistance, the office will continue to be a source of information and welcome for all.

For anyone who would like to send well wishes to Debi during her recovery, the address is:

Debi Reynolds 12 Old Colony Rd. Auburn, MA 01501

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.

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.



February 2026 Herald: The next newsletter will be in the February 1st bulletin. The deadline for articles is Monday, January 26th. Please have your articles in.

Thank you, Debi

ONECALL TELLALL... Don't sit and wonder on a Sunday morning of a storm 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.

A Quick Note from Debi

While I am out, we will not be scheduling any Events (mainly evening events, weddings, etc.). If a committee has a meeting that needs to go on the calendar, Veronica can take care of that. If you have an event that you would like to schedule for further out in the year, please send an email and I will respond as soon as I am able to after I return.

God Moment

A God Moment from Stacy Nichols-Byll

God drove with my daughter and me as she moved across the country from Nebraska to Washington, DC. We stayed with a woman whose simple hospitality opened my daughter up to share experiences with her in a rare moment of openness. #God's Servant

When the snowstorm came, it served to slow us down, aligning our arrival with her delayed housing approval... Getting to DC a day later worked out perfectly. #God's Timing

Twice we were spared from traffic accidents by seconds. #God's Protection

We spoke through many issues. #God's Healing and Reconciliation

I was thankful that God's influence was present and EVIDENT every step of the way.

DID YOU KNOW?

Epiphany, January 6, marking the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas, is a celebration of light—the light of the star that guided the Magi to the manger in Bethlehem to worship the Christ Child who came as the Light of the World. Light thus plays an important role in Christian symbolism and worship.

The Bible is permeated with imagery related to light. A great deal of this imagery relates to light as a symbol. However, there are also multiple Biblical references to actual physical light, beginning with the creation story in Genesis in which light is the first thing created. In many stories of the Bible physical light is both life-giving and protective, as when the Israelites are led through the wilderness with the pillar of fire by night.

Physical light also plays a prominent role both in worship and in other encounters with God. In the Old Testament lamps radiating light were important in the worship of tabernacle and temple. Mount Sinai glowed with light as Moses met with God, and Moses' face subsequently radiated light after this encounter. In the New Testament we see light as the shepherds receive the news of Jesus' birth from the angels, and of course the Magi follow the light of a star to find Jesus. At his conversion Paul is blinded by a flash of light, and at the end of the Bible in the book of Revelation the New Jerusalem is a city totally filled with light. Light has always been an important element in Christian symbolism culminating in Jesus as the Light of the World.

The stained glass of our sanctuary is a literal and figurative reflection of the “light mysticism” of theologians of the era of the great Gothic cathedrals in Europe, especially France, where stained glass originated. Medieval theologians valued light because it represented all that was good and also related it to beauty. The softening and diffusion of the light through the colored glass represents the mystery and holiness of God.

There is a wealth of imagery and symbolism in Wesley's windows, but part of their value in the space of worship is the overall effect of the transformation of light. From the booklet *The Windows of Wesley*: “Stained glass under sunlight becomes a thing alive. Its colors constantly change—every minute of every daylight hour. It is vibrant and sparkling. It glows with the richness of costly gems caught in brilliant light. And so it parallels the moods of life...And it carries the light of hope and faith so that all may see.”

As we sit in our worship space and contemplate the interplay of light and color may we find our lives transfigured and transformed as well so that we may ourselves live as reflections of the light of Christ to the world.

Submitted by
Deborah A. O'Driscoll



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WESLEY STAFF & LEADERSHIP TEAM

Pastor	Rev. Nizzi Santos Digan	Board of Trustees Chair	Gary Robinson
Organist	Ronna Davis	Carty Cupboard Food Pantry	Chris Flagg
Chancel Choir Director	David Potts	Education Committee Co-Chairs	Joseph Fletcher
Ghanaian Choir Director	Desmond Cheetham		Ivy Hammond
Director of Children's Ministries	Rhianna Burke	Youth Bible Study	Joseph Fletcher
Church Business Administrator	Matt Crane	Finance & Stewardship Co-Chairs	William Wong
Church Secretary	Debi Reynolds		Peter Hansen
Building Superintendent	Phil Johnson	Financial Secretary	Earl Flagg
Custodians	April Dylewicz	Church Auditor	Cynthia Fletcher
Head Usher	Gerard Piscitelli	Ghanaian Association	Paul Hayfron
Communion Steward	David Dagle	Hospitality Chair	Linda D'Acri
Wesley Tech Team	Earl Flagg	Medical Ministry	Ron Ramsay
Sunday Security	Mark Muncey	Mission Coordinators	Maria Gorsuch-Kennedy
Church Council Chair	Adam Flagg		Donna Hirtle
Co-Lay Leaders	Brent Drajesk	Staff-Parish Relations Co-Chairs	Chris Flagg
	Gifty Bentum-Asante		Janet Amoako
	Joseph Fletcher	United Women in Faith Co-Chairs	Barbara Ingrassia, Sandra McManus, Cordelia Ferdinand
Lay Spiritual Director, Music Committee Chair, and Worship Committee Chair	Debbie O'Driscoll		