

The Wesley Crier

A PUBLICATION OF WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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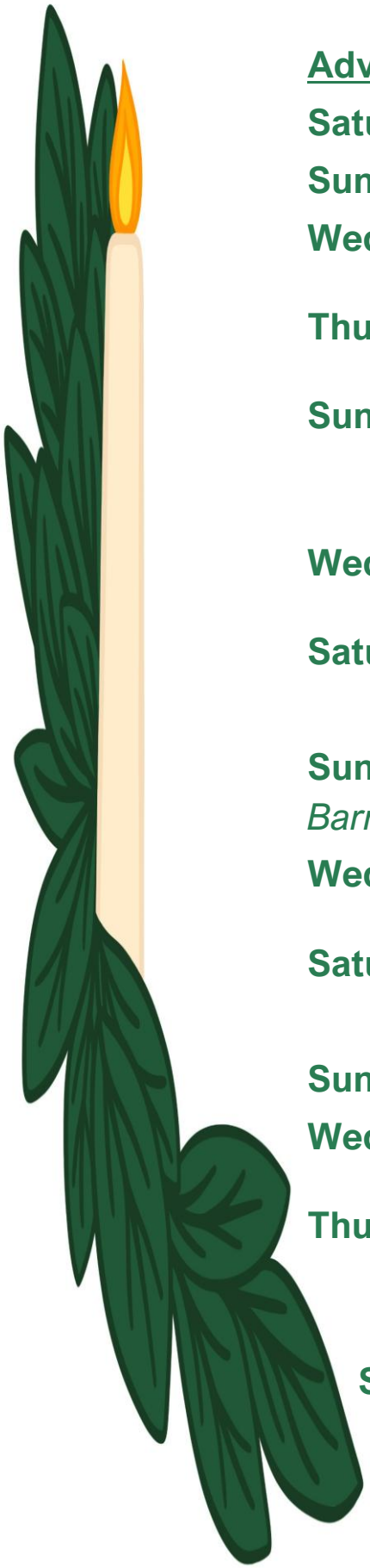
What Will You Bring?

Were there three kings who came following the star to find the newborn King of the Jews? We don't actually know, from scripture, how many there were, though there *were* three gifts. Were they actually kings? Probably not, they are called "magi", which translates, more or less, as "priests". Did they ride camels? Quite possibly, but it's not noted in the scripture. It does appear that there was a significant stellar event of some kind at the approximately the right time, which is fascinating.

We do know that they, whoever and however many they were, came from the east, and that they brought gifts; gold, frankincense and myrrh. The gift of gold tells us that the magi recognized the child as a king. The gift of frankincense tells us that they recognized him as a priest, since frankincense was used in priestly rituals. The gift of myrrh alerts us to their intuition that in the end, death would be his destiny, as myrrh was used to prepare bodies for burial. This is the "epiphany" that the church calendar refers to; the realization of the significance of the birth of this child.

You are invited to come and "to worship him", beginning in this Advent season, along with the priests, and the shepherds, and the animals, and his parents. Even though they all came at different times in the story, we gather them all around our nativities, because each has a significant message to share. And a specific gift to bring. What will you bring as you join them? Take some time to imagine yourself there, celebrating with all of the others.

Christ has come for all of us as king, priest, sacrifice, and redeemer. What does that look like in your life? Do you welcome the direction that he brings to your life, the clarity about your purpose? Are you grateful for the immediate access to God with all of our prayers and questions, and grief, and joys? What have you been able to leave behind that had been hindering you? What would you want to offer him to express what he means in your life? "The Little Drummer Boy" teaches us that the simplest gifts are often the best. Like the flowers that a child picks for its parent, they communicate love and trust, and the confidence that whatever the child brings will be accepted and treasured. Whatever you bring to Christ today, and in this season, will also be welcomed, accepted, and treasured by the LORD.



Advent / Christmas Reminders

Saturday, November 28th Decorate Sanctuary 10 AM

Sunday, November 29th First Sunday of Advent

Wednesday, December 2nd Moving On
Advent Study 12 noon – in the Parlor

Thursday, December 3rd Live Nativity 5:30 PM to 7 PM
UWF Christmas Café 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM

Sunday, December 6th Second Sunday of Advent
Advent Dinner 5:30 PM
Delaware Chorale Society Concert 4:00 PM

Wednesday, December 9th Moving On
Advent Study 12 noon – in the Parlor

Saturday, December 12th Breakfast with Santa
8:30 AM

Sunday, December 13th Third Sunday of Advent
Barratt's Chapel Service of Lessons & Carols 4:00 PM

Wednesday, December 16th Moving On
Advent Study 12 noon – in the Parlor

Saturday, December 19th Blue Christmas Service
4 PM

Sunday, December 20th Fourth Sunday of Advent

Wednesday, December 23rd Moving On
Advent Study 12 noon – in the Parlor

Thursday, December 24th Christmas Eve Services
Family Service with candle lighting 4 PM
Communion Service with candle lighting 7 PM

Sunday, December 27th Combined Service
of Lessons & Carols at 9:30 AM (no 8:00 service)

Happy New Year!

Finding and Fostering Our Spiritual Gifts

By: Pastor Christine Bowden



The nominating team continues to meet to develop our leadership team here at Wesley UMC. Each leadership role corresponds with groups of spiritual gifts. As a simple example, someone with the gift of hospitality will be happiest and most effective in a role that involves welcoming and caring for guests. Some of us know what our gifts are, some of us may not be entirely sure. And the nominating team needs your help to understand your gifts and then offer opportunities for you to flourish.

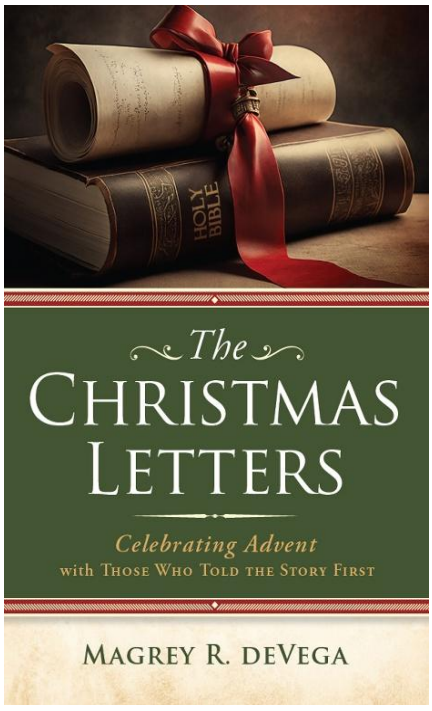
Discipleship Resources offers an online tool to help us all assess or refresh our understanding of our own spiritual gifts.

Discipleship Ministries | Spiritual Gifts Inventory

This assessment is completely confidential, your results will not be reported anywhere and will be wiped as soon as you log off. You make the choice as to whether you want to print and share your results. If you would take the time to do the assessment, for about 20 minutes, and then share your results with the nominating team, we would have a more specific way to invite you to a ministry that would nourish and fulfill your own call. Please consider taking advantage of this opportunity to explore the ways that God is calling you.

Moving On in Advent

For the Advent Season Moving On will be meeting during the day; beginning Wednesday, December 2nd through Wednesday, December 23rd in the parlor at noon.



We will meet each Wednesday to share the study "The Christmas Letters" by Magray DeVega.

The Epistles were actually written well before the gospels, even though the gospels come first in our Bibles. So, the epistles were actually the first writings to share the good news of Jesus Christ, and how his life changes our lives.

Please feel free to bring a brown bag lunch, we'll meet in the parlor and spend an hour reading these early Church "Christmas cards".

What is a “Blue Christmas”?

All of us have experienced loss. We have lost loved ones, or maybe homes, jobs, friendships, pets, hopes and dreams. In the Christmas season these losses are often felt most acutely, because of the contrast with other Christmas festivities.

A Blue Christmas service recognizes and grieves these losses in a compassionate community. We will have music, reflections, and the opportunity to grieve our own losses quietly and honestly, as we look to find comfort in Christ and in each other.



Church Council Meeting



Our final Church Council meeting for 2026 will be held on **Tuesday, December 1st at 6:30 PM** in the parlor. This is the governing body for all our mission and ministry together, if you are a member of the council, please plan to attend. We will be finalizing our 2027 spending forecast and our 2027 slate of nominations at this meeting

Also, committee chairs need to get their reports to Mary Ann Evans the week before the meeting. She will combine them and get them out to the whole council, so that we can read them before we get together.

Finally, Church Council is an open meeting, all church members are welcome to attend, and all council members have a vote.

Another Busy Year for Trustees

The Board of Trustees completed numerous projects, both large and small, over the past year.
To support this work, we drew on the Trustees Edgell/Paradee maintenance endowment and the Maberry endowment fund. We remain committed to proactive property maintenance to help prevent more costly repairs and improve energy efficiency.

Completed projects and milestones:

- Upgraded sanctuary technology.
- Repaired the air conditioning unit in Grace Fellowship Hall.
- Refinished the church's front doors and replaced the kickplates.
- Refinished the 209-address sign.
- Replaced steam pipes serving the church boiler.
- Completed various landscaping projects at the parsonage.
- Purchased a laptop to support remote work for the bookkeeper.
- Refinished the floor in Grace Fellowship Hall.
- Replaced church siding following the August's storm.
- Planted Memorial Tree for Sigrid Mills and Daughter with memorial stone.
- Repaired the irrigation system at the Ed Building.
- Replaced and painted two exterior doors at the SMC.
- Installed a new television in the main hall to display announcements for Preschool/PlayCare parents during drop-off and pickup.
- Painted the preschool classrooms in the main building.
- Repaired a wall and painted the office of the Pastor of Congregational Connection.
- Repaired the exterior wall and completed painting in St. Paul's Chapel.
- Purchased laptop computers for Zoom meetings.
- Replaced the flat roof on the Ed Building.

Projects currently underway:

- Alice Guerrant Bequest
- Snow removal bid
- Boiler repairs

Future Project

- Solar Panel Grant
- Update Heating System

Maintaining our buildings requires a substantial financial commitment. The Board of Trustees remains dedicated to preserving facilities that reflect our shared pride while exercising responsible stewardship of our finances and investments.

Thank you.
John Dryda
Chair, Board of Trustees

Pastor’s Discretionary Fund

By: Michele Dryda, Administrative Assistant



Compassion in Action: The Impact of Your Gifts to the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund

Unexpected financial hardships, such as an overdue bill or medical expense, can put a family’s stability at risk. Through your generosity, our church’s **Pastor’s Discretionary Fund** has provided **$6,831.03** in direct, confidential emergency assistance to neighbors in our community.

Every dollar contributed to the fund directly supports individuals and families facing urgent financial needs, with care and respect for their dignity. Recent contributions have provided assistance to 25 families in two key areas:

- Utility Assistance (15 families): Your gifts covered $3,414.03 in overdue utility bills, preventing service disconnections and helping households maintain access to essential electricity, water, and heating during periods of financial hardship.
- Rental Assistance (10 families): Your contributions provided $3,417.00 in emergency rental assistance, helping local families facing eviction remain in their homes and maintain stability while addressing financial challenges.

This **$6,831.03** in assistance reflects the practical impact of your generosity: helping neighbors meet essential needs, easing financial stress, and demonstrating the care and support of our church community.

The Pastor’s Discretionary Fund depends entirely on the continued generosity of our congregation. As needs arise in our community, we invite you to prayerfully consider supporting this ministry through a one-time gift or regular giving. Your support helps the church respond with timely, compassionate assistance to neighbors facing financial hardship.



Wesley UMC's music department is in full swing as we head into the month of December! We are busily preparing special handbell and choral selections for the beautiful services of Advent. Josh Bogus also continues to prepare beautiful contemporary selections for each worship service in Advent!

The Chancel Choir had a retreat on Saturday, November 14, to begin our preparations. Thank you to all who came and enjoyed a morning of food, fellowship, and a sneak peek at our Christmas time selections. The choir will sing each Sunday in Advent, as well as at the Christmas Eve service at the 7:00 traditional service.

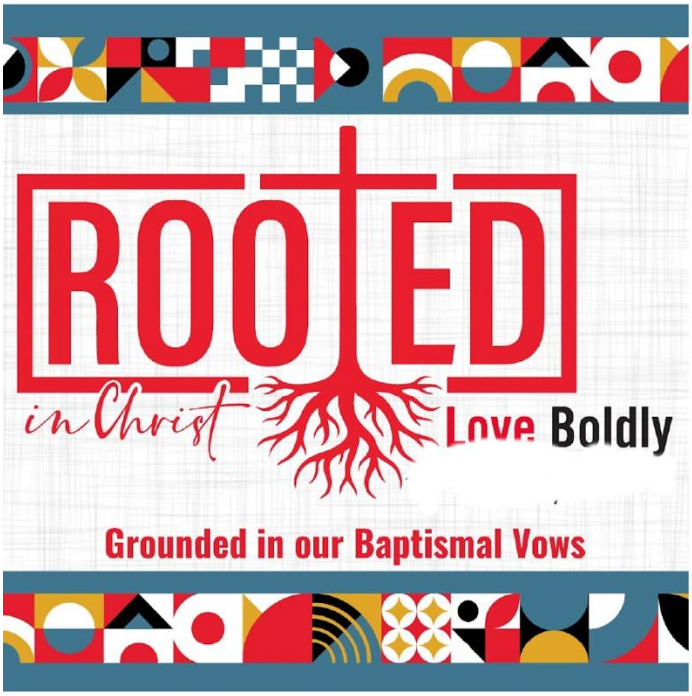
Nancy Jo and Robert Lee will offer a beautiful duet at the Barrett's Chapel lessons and carols service on December 13. JoEllyn and Nancy Jo will also offer their voices in song for the Blue Christmas Service on December 19 at Wesley church. This is a beautiful service of comfort for those who have experienced loss and difficulty.

The Joyful Noise Handbell Choir is also busy preparing selections for Advent and Christmas! Several of the choir members will also ring with the singers at the Delaware Choral Society Concert on December 6 at 4:00 pm. They will also ring the Sunday before Christmas in worship and will add their special beauty to the Christmas Eve traditional service.

Josh will lend his gifts to the Family Service on Christmas Eve, at 4:00 pm.

Thanks to each and every person who is contributing to our beautiful music at Wesley Church! It is an active and fulfilling time of year, and I give thanks for you all!

Sherry Roscoe
Director of Music



BRANCHES is "BRANCHING out"

To connect more closely with our homebound parishioners, caregivers & others who feel alone. Join us to develop this vital & vibrant Ministry. Contact Pastor Karin for more info!

I am the vine, you are the branches.
Those who abide in me and I in them bears much fruit… John 15:5

Dear Friends of Wesley Branches,

In September the founder of Wesley Church Branches, Sigrid Mills, was honored with a tree-planting dedication held next to the Education Building. Now it is time to keep our promise to renew this critical outreach ministry known as, **Wesley Branches**, through which Sigrid and the many other devoted servants, nurtured to our home-bound for many years.

As these individuals and families remain an important part of our church family, let's find ways to bring the love, presence, and compassion of Christ to make them feel really connected to Wesley Church.

Please contact Pastor Karin, Pastor of Congregational Connection or Eunice Craig, as we rejuvenate this outreach ministry. Let us, the branches, commit to…" bearing much fruit"!

Missions Committee

By: Mike Petit de Mange



Holiday Bell Ringing: 2026 Red Kettle Campaign

The Advent season is rich with cherished traditions, and few are as meaningful as serving our neighbors in need. For years, the members and friends of Wesley UMC have proudly joined the Salvation Army's annual Red Kettle Bell-Ringing Campaign—a community ministry that has been spreading hope since 1891.

We invite you to be part of this tradition once again! We are looking for volunteers to ring the bell for a one-hour shift at **Redner's Supermarket** (Greentree Village Shopping Center, Dover) on:

- **Thursday, December 10, 2026**
- **Friday, December 11, 2026**

How to Sign Up:

- **In Person:** Visit Missions Committee Co-Chair Mike Petit de Mange in Fellowship Hall on Sundays following the 9:30 AM service to put your name on the sign-up sheet.
- **By Phone:** Call or text Mike directly at **302-387-5997** to claim your shift.

Thank you for sharing your time, warmth, and holiday spirit to support this vital community ministry!

Missions' Busy Season Is in Full Swing!

The fall and winter seasons are packed with meaningful ways to volunteer and serve at Wesley. We would love to welcome new faces to our Missions Committee, which meets every other month from 6:30–7:30 PM both in person and on Zoom.

Project Angel Tree

Wesley participates in this outreach ministry by supporting families who have loved ones who are incarcerated this holiday season.

- **How to help:** Pick up a tag from the table near Fellowship Hall.
- **Important Dates:** All gifts are due back wrapped by **December 1st** so we can organize them for our **Breakfast with Santa** event on **December 12th**, where families are invited to enjoy breakfast and pick up their gifts.

Ongoing Project: Community Meal

Come help us prepare lunch for 80 neighbors to enjoy! We welcome everyone who loves to plan, shop, and chop.



- **Schedule:** Setup begins at 10:30 AM, lunch is served at noon, and cleanup starts at 1:00 PM.
- **Thank You:** We are deeply grateful to the groups and individuals who stepped up this year: Carol Gambone, Tobi Hope O'Brien, Patty Field (x2), Larry Josefowski (x2), Val Branch from Calvary (for swapping a weekend with Wesley), the Trustees, Jerry and Eunice Craig, the Choir, and Pastor Will Grimes who attends Pickle Ball & his team from Solid Rock Baptist.
- **Sign Up for 2027:** Each year, Wesley sets a goal of having a dedicated lead sign up for one meal for the entire year—and we get closer every time! We are already filling our 2027 calendar (special thanks to the Search class for claiming January). Carol will reach out to past volunteers soon, or you can reserve your 2027 date now by emailing Carol Gambone at **psu_turtle@hotmail.com**.

New Ministry: Dessert-Making Committee



Want to support the Community Meal, but can't commit a full Saturday? Join our new Dessert-Making Committee!

- **How it works:** Whether you love baking cookies and cakes, have a favorite family recipe to share, or prefer to donate store-bought treats, we would love to serve them at our Community Meal.

Get involved: Email Carol Gambone at **psu_turtle@hotmail.com**, and we will coordinate a weekend that fits your schedule. Thank you in advance for helping launch this sweet new ministry!

Family Life

By: Mardi Spangler & Jim Thistlewood, Co-Chairs

Family Life Updates & Upcoming Advent Events

Thank you to everyone who joined us for **Trunk or Treat** on October 24! With new crafts, fun games, and plenty of sweet treats, it was a wonderful success. Be sure to check out the pictures from the event on page 13.

As the Advent season approaches, Family Life is gearing up for our busiest and most joyful time of year. We invite you to participate in our upcoming holiday events as we celebrate the reason for the season:

- **Live Nativity at the City of Dover Tree Lighting**
  - **When:** Thursday, December 3, 2026, at 5:00 PM
  - **Details:** Join us for a meaningful community outreach event featuring live animals! We are looking for volunteers to dress up and help recreate the nativity scene. Costumes are provided, and no acting experience is necessary.

- **Advent Dinner**
  - **When:** Sunday, December 6, 2026, at 5:30 PM
  - **Where:** Grace Fellowship Hall
  - **Details:** The committee will provide ham, macaroni and cheese, green bean casserole, rolls, and dessert. Please bring a side dish that serves 8 people to share.
  - **Say Cheese:** While you should absolutely bring your own cameras for personal snapshots, we will also have a professional photographer on-site taking photos against a beautiful Christmas backdrop completely free of charge.



- **Breakfast with Santa**
  - **When:** Saturday, December 12, 2026, at 8:30 AM
  - **Details:** Bring the family and enjoy a light continental breakfast and festive fun with Santa.



Photos from Family Life's 2026 Trunk-or-Treat



















WESLEY PRESCHOOL AND PLAYCARE

By: Sanura Hinton, Preschool Secretary

November was a wonderful month filled with learning, community, and special memories! Here is a look back at what our students were up to:

- Fifer Orchards Field Trip (November 4): Our kindergarteners had a blast exploring the orchard on their very first field trip of the year.
- Chick-fil-A Fundraiser (November 9): A huge thank you to everyone who came out and supported our school!
- Progress Reports (November 12): We loved sharing updates on all the growth and milestones your children have achieved so far.
- Family Luncheon (November 18): Thank you for joining us—it was such a joy to connect and share a meal together.
- Abbott's Mill Nature Center Visit (November 23): Students were fascinated by a special presentation on Delaware's early inhabitants, learning how Native Americans thoughtfully utilized nature for their everyday needs.
- Thanksgiving Break (November 25–27): We hope your family enjoyed a restful and cozy holiday break!

Looking Ahead Mark your calendars for these upcoming events:

- December 3: Annual Tree Lighting
- December 21–31: Winter Break (School Closed)

Thank you for being such a vital part of our preschool family. We wish you and your loved ones a warm, joyful holiday season!

Have questions about enrollment? Give our office a call at 302-678-8987—we are always happy to help!

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

By: Mary Ann Evans, President



CHRISTMAS CAFÉ

The United Women in Faith will once again hold our **Christmas Café** during the City of Dover Tree Lighting and Wesley's Live Nativity!!

Thursday, December 3 from 5 PM to 7:30 PM. in Grace Fellowship Hall! Along with selling Chili, Hot Dogs & Chili Dogs (and of course Hot Chocolate) we will have our homemade Christmas Cookie Sale!!

Please plan to join us on December 3rd, but help us too, by baking cookies for the cookie sale!! Please have any baked cookies or brownies to the kitchen by 3 PM on Thursday, December 3rd.
All proceeds that UWF raise go to help women, children & youth!!

The UWF held our fall Unit Meeting on Wednesday, November 18th. We approved our budget and our executive board for 2027. We welcome Lynne Kimball to our board as Membership Nurture & Outreach Chair. AND a BIG thank you to Nicky Satterfield for her many years of service to our board as the membership chair!!

Our two circles will have luncheons in December instead of their regular meetings. Barbara Circle is December 8th and Mary Martha Circle is December 10th.
Feel free to join either circle even though there will not be a formal meeting. Meet some new friends and learn more about UWF.
Contact Mary Ann Evans if you are interested in visiting or joining!!! 302-383-0841

As 2026 comes to a close I want to thank everyone at Wesley for their support to United Women in Faith throughout the year. It is only because of the support of everyone in the congregation that we can continue to be able to support women, children & youth throughout our local neighborhood as well as our neighbors across the world.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!!

Food Handler Certification Reminder

By: Michele Dryda, Administrative Assistant

Several of our church's Food Handler certificates have expired—or are nearing expiration. Please take a moment to check your expiration date and make sure your certification is up to date!

State of Delaware Kitchen Requirements

To keep our church compliant and our guests safe, please keep these two requirements in mind whenever using the kitchen:

- **Certified Supervision:** The State of Delaware requires at least one person with a current Food Handler certificate to be present in the kitchen during all church events and Community Meals.
- **Annual Volunteer Form:** Every kitchen volunteer must complete a *Conditional Volunteer and Food Employee Interview Form* once a year. Both the volunteer and the certified Food Handler on duty must sign the form before filing it in the black file box in the kitchen.

How to Get Certified (or Renew)

We strongly encourage every committee and group that uses the kitchen to have members complete the 360training Learn2Serve® Food Handler Certification Course.

- **Cost & Format:** $10 (or $9.99 online), self-paced, and takes about two hours to complete.
- **Same-Day Certificate:** Pass the final exam (80% or higher) to download and receive your certificate the very same day. *(Note: Certificates are valid for three years.)*
- **Submit Your Copy:** Once your certificate arrives via email, please forward a copy to Michele in the church office at **mdryda@wesleyumc-dover.com**.

Search Class

By: Eunice Craig and Gigi Windley



*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passion… live lives that are self-controlled, upright and godly**, while we wait for the blessed hope**…*
Titus 2:13

Won't you consider joining Search class this Advent season as we all prepare our homes and our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas Day?

Advent is a season of HOPE, a time to nurture PEACE, and to experience JOY in the anticipation for the LOVE that is made incarnate with the birth of Jesus.

December 6 with **Voices of Angels and Prophets,** Search Class concludes our first Advent study, *Voices of Advent*, by Dr. Matthew L. Skinner. The good news is that there is another opportunity for you to share in your spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ.

December 13 begins our second Advent study, *The Redemption of Scrooge*, by Matt Rawl, (10th Anniversary Edition). Pastor Rawl shows the redemptive power of the Gospels in the "dark, sad, greedy world of Scrooge", a man in need of a second chance, in the classic Dickens novel, *A Christmas Carol*. Pastor Rawls shows how a world blessed with Jesus is transformational, even with someone like Scrooge!

December 13	Bah! Humbug!
December 20	The Remembrance of Christ Past
January 3	The Life of Christmas Present
January 10	The Hope of Christmas Future

Join Search Class on Sunday mornings at 8:35 AM in the Parlor for study and fellowship. Light refreshments are served. Books are available.

Begin your spiritual preparation for Christmas with an Advent study!

NOTE: There are no Search classes scheduled November 29 or December 27.

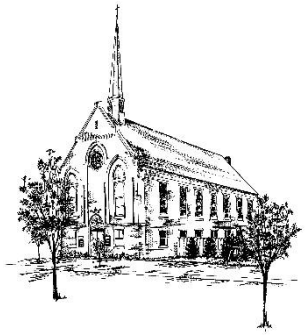
2027 Stewardship Campaign

By: Michele Dryda, Administrative Assistant

Thank you to everyone who joined us for Consecration Sunday on November 22! We are grateful to share that **48 pledge cards** were received. *Please remember that our stewardship campaign remains open throughout the year; if you have not yet made a pledge, we warmly invite you to participate at any time in support of our ongoing mission.*

WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pledge Card



Date_____ **ENV. #** _____

Name_____

Address _____

City/State/Zip_____

Tithes/Offering to:

GENERAL OPERATING FUND	*BLDG. IMPROVEMENT FUND*
(Select one method.)	(Select one method.)
$_____per week	$_____per week
$_____per month	$_____per month

(Your contribution may be raised or lowered at any time by calling the church office at 302-678-9626)

A Tax-Smart Way to Support Our Church Through Your IRA

If you are age 70½ or older, you can support the mission of Wesley Church directly from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).

Under the 2026 tax rules, itemizers can only deduct charitable gifts that exceed 0.5% of their Adjusted Gross Income (AGI). Because a QCD transfers funds directly from your IRA custodian to our church, the gift is excluded from your taxable income altogether rather than taken as an itemized deduction. This allows you to bypass the 0.5% AGI floor, keep your AGI lower, and satisfy all or part of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) if you are 73 or older.

Please note: To qualify, the transfer must go directly from your IRA administrator to Wesley Church. We encourage you to speak with your financial or tax advisor to see if a QCD is right for you.

2026 Year-End Dates to Remember

By: Michele Dryda, Administrative Assistant



As we prepare to close our books for 2026 and step into the ministries God has planned for 2027, we want to thank you for your continued generosity to Wesley UMC.

Giving statements were recently sent out. If you have any questions regarding your statement, please contact the church office before December 23—we want to make sure all your donations are directed where you intended them to be.

Finally, we invite you to consider making a special year-end gift. Every contribution, no matter the size, directly supports our ongoing outreach, worship, and care for families in need.

Important Year-End Giving Deadlines:

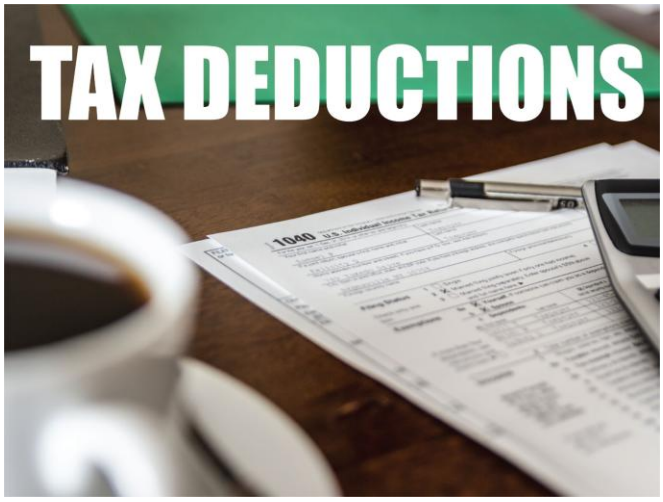
To ensure your donation is credited toward your 2026 tax-deductible giving statement, please keep the following deadlines in mind:

- **In Person:** Place your gift in the offering plate during our final Sunday service on **December 27, 2026,** or brought to the church office on or before **December 29, 2026**.
- **By Mail:** Checks must be received in the church office on or before **December 29, 2026,** and mailed to 209 S State St., Dover, DE 19904.
- **Online:** Submit your gift via our secure portal at https://onrealm.org/wesleyumcdover/-/form/give/now by **11:59 PM on December 31, 2026.**

Thank you again for your faithfulness and heart for our church. May you and your loved ones experience deep peace and joy throughout this holiday season.

Tax Deduction Opportunities

By: Rebecca Chance, Accounting Consultant



New Tax Deduction Opportunity for 2026!

Did you know that beginning in 2026, you may be able to deduct charitable contributions even if you don't itemize deductions on your tax return?

Under the new tax law, individuals who take the standard deduction may deduct up to **$1,000 in qualifying cash donations ($2,000 for married couples filing jointly)** to eligible charitable organizations, including our church.

As we approach the end of the year, please consider this opportunity to support our church's mission while potentially reducing your taxable income. **Donations must be made by December 31, 2026**, to qualify for the 2026 tax year.

Please consult your tax advisor regarding your eligibility and applicable deduction limits.



EQUIPPING FAITHFUL LEADERS

Nicaragua Methodist Pastoral Education & Encouragement Mission
October 13–20, 2026

Rev. Juanita Lopez, District Superintent

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, as indeed you are doing."
— 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NRSVUE)

What Does It Mean to be Methodist?

This, perhaps, is a question we take for granted here at Wesley Church, named after the founder of the Methodist Movement. But interestingly, this was a burning question for the pastors of the Nicaraguan Methodist Church when the President of the Church, Rev. Guillermo Ríos, surveyed them and invited me to facilitate discussions around Methodist identity.

In 1996, I made my first journey to Nicaragua, beginning a relationship with the people of Nicaragua, our United Methodist missionaries in Nicaragua and the Methodist Church of Nicaragua that has now spanned thirty years. What began as a mission experience has become an enduring partnership grounded in Christian fellowship, theological education, mutual encouragement, and a shared commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

My return to Nicaragua, October 13–20, 2026, came at a particularly challenging time for the Methodist Church there. The loss of its legal recognition, combined with ongoing political and economic pressures, has created significant difficulties for the church and its leadership. Yet the pastors continue to serve their congregations with remarkable faithfulness and perseverance.

This comes because in some situations Methodist pastors have been subject to criticism, demonization and frankly "turf wars" from other denominations including Roman Catholics, Pentecostals and non-denominational pastors, as well as a growing presence of Latter-Day Saints [The first Mormon Temple in Nicaragua was just completed in Managua!]. The primary purpose of this mission was to provide theological education, practical resources, and encouragement to 22 Methodist pastors representing four districts. Our gatherings took us to Managua, León, and Jinotega.

We briefly reviewed some basic Methodist history, the concept of GRACE at our Methodist core; the tenets known to our theological task often called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Experience, Tradition and Reason. Using Spanish-language editions of *Five Marks of a Methodist* by Steve Harper and *Three Simple Rules* by Rueben Job, we examined the relationship between personal faith and Christian discipleship.

I also provided:



Pastors gather at Loma Linda Church to study

- The Spanish edition of the *United Methodist Social Principles*, noting that context is extremely important and what might be appropriate in the United States may not be appropriate in Nicaragua.
- Digital Spanish versions of:
    - *This Holy Mystery* [our doctrine on Holy Communion]
    - *By Water and the Spirit* [our doctrine on Baptism]
    - Concepts from Covenant Discipleship [Acts of Worship, Acts of Devotion, Acts of Compassion & Acts of Justice]
    - "Do all the good you can, etc." attributed to John Wesley
- *A Blessing of the Animals* from our *United Methodist Book of Worship* and other materials for distribution by President Rios of the Methodist Church of Nicaragua.

In addition, each pastor was gifted with lunch at the teaching sessions and a bag of beans, rice, oil, masa, soup mix, coffee, sugar and cookies, and to their great delight dog or cat food. I was also able to bless the owner of La Bicicleta ["the Bicycle" because she is so fast and who helped to build the Altar of Grace Methodist Church by hauling trees, cinder block, sand and rock] with $40 for her food. Each pastor was also given $100 at the teaching be session which is to be followed by $100 each for two more months. These gifts represented more than material assistance. They were tangible expressions of Christian love and solidarity, reminding the pastors that their ministries are valued and that they are not alone.





Yet again, I was also blessed to meet with our outstanding United Methodist missionary, Dr. Belinda Forbes and her husband Gerrardo.





I continue to be inspired by the faithfulness, resilience, and commitment of the pastors and congregations of the Nicaragua Methodist Church! Their witness reminds me that the strength of the church is not ultimately measured by its buildings, financial resources, or institutional structures, but by the faithfulness of people who love God, serve their neighbors, and persevere in hope. And on another happy note, my translator is seriously considering starting a Methodist congregation there!

And perhaps that is the most important message of this journey: **We belong to one another. Our connection in Christ transcends borders, languages, and circumstances.** May we continue to encourage one another and build each other up. I cannot wait to share more of my experience with you!

In Christ's service and love,

Rev. Karin Tunnell

Pastor of Congregational Connection, Wesley Dover





























SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 6 pm Evening Prayer 6:30 pm Church Council Meeting 7 pm DCS	**2** 12:00 pm Moving On Advent Study 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm NA	**3** 5:00 pm Living Nativity & Christmas Café 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm Handbells 7 pm Choir	**4** 6 pm Evening Prayer 6:30 pm ACA Mtg.	**5** 12 pm (Noon) Community Meal Hosted by Calvary Church Memorial service for Tom Welch
6 8 am Worship 8:30 am Search Class 9:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Fellowship 5:30 pm Advent Dinner	**7** 10 am Staff Meeting 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm Pickleball	**8** 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm Handbells 7 pm Choir	**9** 12:00 pm Moving On Advent Study 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm NA	**10** 6 pm Evening Prayer	**11** 6 pm Evening Prayer 6:30 pm ACA Mtg.	**12** 12 pm (Noon) Community Meal Hosted by Wesley Church 2 pm Grace Notes Piano Recital 2-4 pm Patty McPhail - GFH
13 8 am Worship 8:35 am Search Class 9:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Fellowship 11:00 am Worship Committee Meeting	**14** 10 am Staff Meeting 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm Pickleball	**15** 7 am Men's (Breakfast) 6 pm Evening Prayer 6:30 pm Trustees	**16** 12:00 pm Moving On Advent Study 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm NA	**17** 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm Handbells 7 pm Choir	**18** 6 pm Evening Prayer 6:30 pm ACA Mtg.	**19** 9:30 am Choir Rehearsal 12 pm (Noon) Community Meal Hosted by Wyoming Church 4 pm Blue Christmas
20 8 am Worship 8:35 am Search Class 9:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Fellowship	**21** 10 am Staff Meeting 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm Pickleball	**22** 6 pm Evening Prayer	**23** 12:00 pm Moving On Advent Study 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm NA	**24** **4 pm Family Christmas Eve Service** **7 pm Traditional Christmas Eve Service**	**25** **Church Closed** **Merry Christmas**	**26** 12 pm (Noon) Community Meal Hosted by Crossroads
27 8 am Worship 8:35 am Search Class 9:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Fellowship	**28** 10 am Staff Meeting 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm Pickleball	**29** 6 pm Evening Prayer	**30** 6 pm Evening Prayer 6 pm NA	**31** 6 pm Evening Prayer		