

Wesley Grove **Messenger**

December 2024

From the Pastor's Desk...



Happy December! Merry Christmas!

Thanksgiving has passed; perhaps you celebrated with loved ones, perhaps you hosted 20+ folks, or perhaps it was a small gathering. Either way, the turkeys have been eaten, the cranberry sauce has been passed, and we all got to enjoy pumpkin pie, arguably the best thing since sliced bread. For many people, including my family, there is a tradition to start celebrating Christmas as soon as Thanksgiving is over. After all, Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday happen just after. The time between Thanksgiving and Christmas feels like a liminal space, culturally we acknowledge it as a holiday season, but really, it's a time of waiting for the Big Day: Christmas! For many folks, that means shopping all season, decorating to the max, or if you're anything like a Butler-Cefalo, nurturing the homemade fruitcake that's started on Black Friday every year.



All of these festivities, while quite fun and things I deeply enjoy participating in, also feel somewhat skin-deep. The focus can easily turn towards having the best tree, the most perfect gift, or the best Christmas set-up. As you read this, I want you to consider a different way to spend this liminal time.

The First Sunday of December begins the Season of Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word, *adventus*, which means "coming" or "visit." Traditionally, this season is celebrated by remembering and reflecting on the themes of hope, peace, love, and joy while we wait in anticipation for the coming of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It's appealing to jump straight into Christmas after Thanksgiving. It's fun to decorate the mantle in your family's home with nutcrackers, stockings, and Christmas cards. It's inviting to rush into the *experience* of Christmas, because otherwise, we are left with just being in this liminal space between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Now, to be honest, I have already put up my spouse's, cat's, and my stockings and all of our Christmas decorations, so I'm certainly not advocating for you to not decorate and celebrate.

However, I instead invite you to co-exist with the liminal space. Remember that this season is so much more than gift wrapping, shopping, and decorating. This Season of Advent -- this period of anticipation and waiting --- calls us to do exactly that. As we enter this season, my prayer and hope is that we can all slow down, challenge the societal invitation to fill every waking moment from now to December 24th with shopping, baking, wrapping, or decorating, and instead, just *be*. Allow yourself to wait in anticipation, too. Perhaps as you're hanging your stockings or stringing your lights, you can talk with loved ones about each week's theme of Advent. Slow down, and feel your anticipation build as we wait to see our Messiah and Savior come, not as a mighty giant, but as an innocent baby in a simple barn. That is the true reason for this season, and may we all reflect on just that.

With the Love of Christmas,
Pastor Abby

Lectiionary Readings

December 1, 2024
First Sunday in Advent

Jeremiah 33:14-16
Psalm 25:1-10
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Luke 21:25-36

December 8, 2024
Second Sunday in Advent

Malachi 3:1-4
Luke 1:68-79
Philemon 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

December 15, 2024
Third Sunday in Advent

Zephaniah 3:14-20
Isaiah 12:2-6
Philemon 4:4-7
Luke 3:7-18

December 22, 2024
Fourth Sunday in Advent

Micah 5:2-5a
Luke 1:46b-55
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45

December 24, 2024
Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-20

December 29, 2024
Sixth Day of Christmas

1 Samuel 2:18--0, 26
Psalm 148
Colossians 3:12-17
Luke 2:41-52

October 2024 Financial Report

Rick Monarch, Treasurer

Expenses

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| BWC Mission Share | \$1,432.38 |
| Senior Pastor's Salary (1/3 of total salary) | \$835.33 |
| Associate Pastor's Salary (1/3 of total salary) | \$663.17 |
| Church Secretary's Wages | \$1,666.17 |
| Organist / Pianist | \$600.00 |
| Music Director | \$300.00 |
| Worker's Compensation Insurance | \$0.00 |
| BWC Annual Conference for Lay Delegate | \$0.00 |
| Payroll Taxes | \$178.20 |
| Capital Improvement Costs | \$12,399.00 |
| Grass Cutting Costs | \$1,770.00 |
| Snow Plowing Costs | \$0.00 |
| Groundskeeper Costs | \$0.00 |
| Custodian's Salary | \$490.00 |
| Programs | \$107.11 |
| Property Insurance | \$0.00 |
| Administrative Expenses | \$149.32 |
| South Damascus Charge Treasury | \$120.91 |
| Trustees - Maintenance Costs | \$1,226.99 |
| Parsonage Property Taxes | \$0.00 |
| Montgomery County Solid Waste Tax | \$0.00 |
| Miscellaneous | \$285.00 |
| Total Expenses | \$22,223.58 |

Income

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Weekly Collections | \$3,645.00 |
| Cell Tower Rental Fee from Sprint | \$2,299.33 |
| Rental Property Income | \$2,000.00 |
| Use of Hall Fees | \$0.00 |
| Transfer from Memorial Fund to General Fund | \$9,291.90 |
| Total Income | \$17,236.23 |





Fellowship News

Becky Lewis, Chair

Another year is rushing to its close, but not before it's time for our time-honored Wesley Grove Christmas traditions. This will include a trio of Christian Fellowship events: the annual Wesley Grove Community Tree Lighting on Wednesday, December 4, at 7 pm; our Christmas Holiday Luncheon on Thursday, December 12, at 1 pm; and our annual Christmas Caroling and Dinner on Sunday, December 15, at 4 pm.

Get your warm weather gear ready for the Tree Lighting: if the advance forecast holds, it looks like it will be a chilly evening, and what better weather to get us all in the mood for the Holidays? If you haven't signed up to bake cookies or help with the program, please contact Tammy at 301-253-0044 right away, and you also can help just by showing up and sharing the Christmas Spirit with those in our community. Our Holiday Gift Shop will be open during this event as well.

After you've gotten your voice in tune at the Community Tree Lighting, you'll want to sign up for our caroling event on December 15 and continue to spread good cheer to some of our members that we don't see as often. We'll end up at the Monarchs' home at 9620 Watkins Road for a fellowship dinner.

And if you've signed up for our Christmas Holiday Luncheon at Morgan's American Grill in New Market on Thursday, December 12, be sure you get your payment of \$25 (cash or check made payable to WGUMC) to Tammy by Sunday, December 8.

Looking ahead to the New Year, we'll be meeting to plan the calendar for 2025 in January; if you have suggestions for activities, please let Becky know.

Christmas Eve Worship Services

The South Damascus Charge will offer three worship services this year on Tuesday, December 24. You and your family are welcome to attend any or all of these services:

- Salem UMC @ 4 pm
- Mt. Tabor UMC @ 6 pm
- Wesley Grove UMC @ 9 pm



All of us in the Charge wish all of you a very Merry Christmas with your families and your friends!



Education News

Tammy Monarch, Chair

Please know that you are welcome to join us any Sunday morning in the Fellowship Hall at 9:30 am. Our multi-age, one-room, Sunday School class is open to anyone wanting to learn more about Our Almighty Lord and to continue on his or her Christian journey.

During this month of Advent Sundays, we are reading and discussing *An Unlikely Advent: The Extraordinary People of the Christmas Story* by UM Pastor Rachel Billups. This book focuses on the "other" characters in the Biblical story of Jesus' birth: folks like Zechariah, Elizabeth, and King Herod.

Our Sunday School class will not meet on the morning of December 29. We will resume meeting on Sunday, January 5 when we continue with our study of the similarities and parallels between various comic book superheroes and Biblical figures and their stories.

Missions News

Linda Chatterton, Chair

The Missions Committee has received the names, ages, and gift wishes of three families that we are sponsoring this Christmas Season. Gift slips are available for pickup in the vestibule. You also may donate toward grocery store gift cards for these families by placing your donation (either cash or a check made payable to WGUMC) in the small box on the table in the vestibule.

All monetary donations and gifts (wrapped and with their gift slips on them) need to be brought to the church by Sunday, December 15, so that they can be delivered sometime the week before Christmas.



Thank you in advance for helping with this very meaningful community service project during this busy Holiday Season!

Please remember that we also are collected foods flavored with the special flavors of the season — peppermint and gingerbread — throughout this month as well as the regular pantry staples of cereal, jelly, and peanut butter for the Damascus Help Food Pantry.

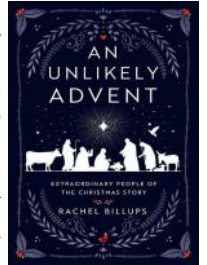


Special Worship Service on Sunday, December 29

Please note that all of us in the South Damascus Charge will be worshipping together at Mt. Tabor United Methodist Church on Sunday, December 29. The service begins at 11 am, and Pastor Abby will be leading us, while Pastor Nick and his family are in Arkansas celebrating Christmas and New Year's with his and Carla's families.

Advent Book Study

Our Advent Season book study of *An Unlikely Advent: The Extraordinary People of the Christmas Story* by UM Pastor Rachel Billups starts this week. Our sessions will occur twice a week — in person on Sunday mornings at 9:30 at Wesley Grove and via Zoom on Monday nights at 7. You may join us at either time (or both!) as we discuss the four chapters of this book.



And it's not too late to join us! Even if you do not have a copy of the book and/or have not participated in the past, you can still join us as we begin this week. Contact Tammy if this is something you would like to do, and she will get you up to date with the rest of the group.



Christmas Luncheon

We hope that many of you are planning to join us for our Wesley Grove Church Family Christmas Luncheon! This annual event will be held on Thursday, December 12 at 1 pm at Morgan's American Grill on Route 144 in New Market. The cost is \$25 per person, which includes a choice of sandwich or salad, a side, beverage, and dessert. If you have not yet signed up and you would still like to join in on the fun and merriment, it is not too late! Sign up in the vestibule or call Tammy at 301-253-0044 to reserve your space.



Poinsettias

If you would like to place a poinsettia in the Sanctuary in honor or memory of a loved one, please complete one of the order forms found in the vestibule or contact Tammy to receive one via email. The cost is \$10 per plant. All orders and payments (either cash or a check made payable to WGUMC) must be at the church by Sunday, December 15. These beautiful red and white flowering plants will decorate the church on December 22 and 24.



Christmas Greetings for Our Pastors

Christmas cards, handwritten notes, baked goodies, and other small gifts for our two pastors may be brought to the vestibule any time this month. Please place your gifts in the two baskets marked Pastor Nick and Pastor Abby. These baskets of Christmas Cheer will be presented to the two of them during our worship service on Christmas Eve.



Holiday Crafts & Gifts

Many beautiful items made to sell at our annual craft bazaar are still for sale in the Fellowship Hall. These items include hand-sewn Christmas table linens, hand-carved wooden reindeer and snowmen, cookie mixes in decorative jars, gift baskets of all sizes, holiday centerpieces, all types of ornaments, and gorgeous wreaths for your front doors. If you would like to see and maybe purchase any of these craft and gift items, please contact Tammy at 301-253-0044 before December 25.



- 3 Cathy Burke
Matt Lind
- 6 Dave Wilson
- 12 Josh Park
- 14 Chris Lee
- 16 Nicko Hull
- 19 Ciarra Crawford
- 20 Ollie Gray
- 28 Sheryl Birkhead
- 29 Roberta Grimes
- 30 Peter Hughes
- 31 Lorie Falk



A Great, Big, Huge

Thank You

**goes out to all ten of
Santa's Elves
who visited the church
on Saturday, November 30
to decorate it for
the Arrival of the Christ Child
later this month!**



Administrative Council Meeting

Monday, November 4, 2024

In Attendance: Steven Arndt, Louise Burdette, Bob Burke (chair), Linda Chatterton, Jim Kemp, Becky Lewis, Brian Lewis, Tammy Monarch, Rick Monarch, and Pastor Nick Works.

Opening: Bob began the meeting at 7 pm.

Devotions: Pastor Nick opened the meeting with a hymn and then lead the council in prayer focusing on "What does God mean to us, and what does it mean to do the church's work?"

Prayer Requests:

Jeff Monarch: End stages of leukemia.

Amy, the mother of the Easlack family from one of Nick's prior churches in NJ, died today from breast cancer at age 48.

Good News: Brian reported that the Methodist Men gave \$200 to UMCOR for Hurricane Relief.

Old Business: None to report.

New Business: Rick reported that the parsonage has been rented, and the new tenants will be moving in on November 15, 2024. (*Note: This did not happen as the tenants backed out of the lease.*)

Minutes: The minutes from our last meeting in September were voted on and unanimously accepted as printed in the October newsletter.

Committee Reports:

Communications

Our Facebook sites are all up-to-date and advertising the Holly Days Craft Bazaar.

Many cards continue to be sent to those in need.

Education

Sunday School has been going well with an average of 12 in attendance.

We are studying the parallels between the superheroes of the DC and Marvel Universes with Jesus and the Biblical stories of God's Universe.

The South Damascus Charge will have a 4-week Advent Book Study in December. We will read and discuss *An Unlikely Advent: The Extraordinary People of the Christmas Story* by Rachel Billups, an UM pastor.

Fellowship

Holly Days Craft Bazaar and Luncheon is Saturday, November 16, from 9 am to 3 pm.

We will provide lunch after church on Sunday, November 17, and everyone is welcome.

Community Tree Lighting Ceremony will be held on Wednesday, December 4 at 7 pm.

Annual Holiday Luncheon at Morgan's American Grill in New Market is Thursday, December 12 at 1 pm.

Christmas Caroling and Dinner will be on Sunday, December 15. We will meet at the hall at 4 pm, carol to some of our older and shut-in members, and then share a fellowship dinner at the Monarchs' home.

Finance

Rick presented the proposed 2025 Church Budget.

After some discussion, we voted on and approved the budget as it was written. Rick also stated that with the monthly income from our rental properties and cell tower, we will need approximately \$1,700 a week in the collection plate.

Tammy contacted DSA concerning a possible contribution for using the ball field this year, but she has not yet received a reply.

Lay Leadership

We will vote on our new 2025 Leadership Roster at our Charge Conference this coming Saturday.

Missions

As a church, we collected 30 boxes of assorted cleaning and personal hygiene products for hurricane relief in our southeastern states.

Damascus Help desperately needs donations of dry cereal and jelly.

SPRC

Evaluations for both pastors have been completed, and Pastor Nick's will be submitted to the BWC soon.

Both pastors, with the help of this committee, are working to develop their professional goals for 2025.

Trustees

The parsonage restoration has been completed and the property is ready for rent.

The bilco doors at the church have been repainted.

The Scates Corporation has completed the replacement of both the hall roof and the parsonage roof. Exterior fascia, soffit, and rake boards have been wrapped in aluminum.

Gutters and downspouts have been replaced at the parsonage.

Septic tanks at both rental houses have been pumped and will be again in October 2025.

Worship

Baptism of Bailey Wood will happen this Sunday, November 10.

Thanksgiving Eve Ecumenical Service will be at Salem UMC in Brookeville on Wed., November 27 at 7 pm.

Pastor's Report:

Pastor Nick stated that he is very happy with his new position as our Senior Pastor.

He is looking forward to the upcoming Charge Conference this Saturday and is thankful for all of the work that goes into it, especially for Tammy's assistance.

He is grateful for Linda's work on the Hurricane Relief effort and the great success of it.

He is thankful for the ministry that is being led by Pastor Abby and is pleased that she is part of our charge. He is collaborating with her and Jeremy weekly to enhance our worship services.

Both pastors are working on a schedule for regular outreach, including both calls and visits.

Next Meeting: Monday, January 13, 2025, at 7 pm.

Tammy will lead us in devotions.

Closure: Bob adjourned the meeting at 8:05 pm.



December 2024

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|--|--|---|--|-----|-----|
| 1 Advent Week 1 9:30 AM— Sunday School 11:00 AM— Worship Service with Communion | 2 7:00 PM— Session #1 of Advent Book Study via Zoom | 3 5:00 PM— Lions Club Dinner and Meeting | 4 7:00 PM— Community Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 Advent Week 2 9:30 AM— Sunday School 11:00 AM— Worship Service <i>Luncheon Deadline</i> | 9 7:00 PM— Session #2 of Advent Book Study via Zoom | 10 7:00 PM— Board of Trustees Meeting | 11 | 12 1:00 PM— Christmas Luncheon at Morgan's American Grill in New Market | 13 | 14 |
| 15 Advent Week 3 9:30 AM— Sunday School 11:00 AM— Worship Service 4:00 PM— Caroling & Dinner <i>Poinsettia Deadline</i> | 16 7:00 PM— Session #3 of Advent Book Study via Zoom | 17 5:00 PM— Lions Club Dinner and Meeting | 18 <i>January Newsletter Deadline</i> | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 Advent Week 4 9:30 AM— Sunday School 11:00 AM— Worship Service | 23 7:00 PM— Session #4 of Advent Book Study via Zoom | 24 Christmas Eve 4:00 PM—Salem 6:00 PM—MT 9:00 PM—WG | 25 Merry Christmas!  | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 Advent Week 4 Christmas Eve No Sunday School 11 AM— South Damascus Charge Worship Service at MTUMC | 30 | 31 | 1 Happy New Year! | | | |

 **Wesley Grove
United Methodist Church**
Church Phone: 301-253-2894
Email: wgumc@wesleygroveumc.org

As a congregation that covenants to walk together in Christ's love, believes that all persons are created equal before God, and affirms the inclusive love of Jesus Christ, we welcome to our work and worship all regardless of race, gender, age, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or economic circumstance.

We're on the Web!
wesleygroveumc.org



Christmas Eve Worship Services

** Join Us at One, Two, or All Three **

Salem UMC @ 4 pm

Mt. Tabor UMC @ 6 pm

Wesley Grove UMC @ 9 pm

To unsubscribe, please call the Wesley Grove UMC Office (301-253-2894) or email wgumc@wesleygroveumc.org

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