

December 23, 2020

## NEWS AND NOTES FROM GRACE & WESLEY

### Ok, So, Now What??



*“When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.”*  
Matthew 2:9-12

On the evening of December 21<sup>st</sup>, my family and I bundled up and went out into the backyard to see the “Christmas Star”. We did not want to miss out on witnessing this remarkable event, which had not been so clearly visible in 800 years. Indeed, the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn was bright and observable to all of us and I am glad we took the time to witness the event.

This experience, of course, brought my mind back to the familiar story in Scripture of the three wise men—those three astrologers who studied the stars and followed the signs that led them directly to the Christ child. Upon witnessing the child, they have an epiphany, recognizing Jesus as the Savior.

Interestingly, however, is the fact that we do not know exactly how this event affected their lives in the long run. I mean, I imagine such an experience renewed and invigorated their faith because an experience with the Son of God certainly produces a new perspective; but, I wonder if when they arrived back home they were left thinking: Ok, so, now what?

I hope and pray God renewed and invigorated your faith during this past Advent Season and that celebrating the birth of the Son of God filled you with hope, peace, joy, and love. Although it was a strange and (hopefully!) unique season, God still provided opportunities for us to grow in our faith, grow in his Word, and bless our community through your VERY generous giving to the Christmas Offering. As we begin (thankfully!) a new year, perhaps some of us are left thinking: Ok, so, now what??

Well, I hope and believe we will slowly begin to be able to safely gather together again as the coming weeks progress. Ideally I could give you a specific timeframe, but all I know at this time is that we were directed to refrain from in person gatherings until at least January 10<sup>th</sup>. As I gain more information, we will communicate it to all of you in a timely manner. I would imagine that as more and more of us receive the vaccine, attendance will slowly begin to increase throughout 2021.

Although 2020 was a year like no other—in a not so positive sense—2021 can be a year like no other as well—in a **very** positive sense. I hope we all begin to realize how fortunate we are to have God with us, through his Son and Spirit, at all times—especially during difficult seasons/years. I hope all of us never take for granted that life as we know it can be turned on its head at any moment, and that this realization inspires us to be thankful for in person fellowship with one another—and that we take advantage of this gift more often!

At the end of the day, none of us know the answer to the question, “So, now what?” My hope and prayer, however, is that whatever 2021 brings, Grace and Wesley will commit to a season of epiphany, in which we continue to listen to God’s leading, become more intentionally about reaching out to our community through evangelism, and keep on generously blessing Mason City because of our love for the Son of God.

Pastor Craig Luttrell



The Bishop and Cabinet of the Iowa United Methodist Church directed all UM churches to **cease all in person activities until January 10<sup>th</sup>** due to increasing COVID rates and the strain on local health care workers. As such, Grace and Wesley will, in compliance, cease in person activities until the Iowa Conference lifts the restrictions. Thank you for your patience and understanding. Pastor Craig and Patty will remain available if you need anything.

For more information about the "Red, Yellow, & Green" phases, please visit: <https://www.iaumc.org/123churchreentry>

### Christmas Offering: It's Not Too Late!

As we are all aware, this is an extremely difficult time for many right here in our own community. There are always needs, but they have been compounded by the pandemic. As such, I am asking you, as you are able, to give generously to the Christmas offering this year. The Grace Christmas offering this year will go to Grace cares, who will disburse the funds to local missions as well as national and international missions. The Wesley Christmas offering this year will go to the Mason City Salvation Army, who assist local persons in need.



**Pastor Craig will be taking some well-deserved time off December 28 – January 3. (Communion will be the second week in January.)**



**Drive Up Communion available in the Wesley parking lot on the January 10, 1:30-2:00 PM.**

The Hawkeye Harvest Food Bank would like to extend its services by delivering food to people who have no way to get to the Food Bank, and would like to invite faith communities and other interested



groups to volunteer to assist with the deliveries. The volunteers would pick up food already boxed and ready to go from the Food Bank and deliver it to the person's home. For more information or to volunteer, contact Carol Clayton at the Hawkeye Harvest Food Bank at 641-424-3073.



Dear Friends, words cannot express my thanks to the Grace and Wesley churches, the Wesley UMW and the many individuals who have showered me with generous gifts, goodies and kindnesses this holiday season.

From the bottom of my heart, I am truly grateful to have been a part of these two wonderful churches for the last 24 years...with maybe a few more yet to come! Thank you for your kindness and generosity. It is very much appreciated.

*Patty*

### Next Newsletter Deadline

Have something to put in the next newsletter? Write up an article and get it to the church office! The deadline for the next newsletter is Monday, January 18.





**Hospital Ins & Outs:**

*(Due to HIPAA regulations, we can only publish names of those who have given their consent, either by letting the church and/or pastor know or through the hospital chaplain.)*

**Condolences:** ...to the friends and family of Jean Payne who passed away on 11-26-2020...Keith Betts who passed away on 12-1-2020...Ronald Pals who passed away on 12-3-2020...to Bruce Kaasa on the loss of his brother...to Kathie Huling on the loss of her sister-in-law.

**Thank You**

Thank you so much for the Thanksgiving treat bag from the UMW that Ann Butcher delivered to me. I appreciate being remembered. *Ida Rhine*

Thank you to the Wesley Women for the Thanksgiving treat. I appreciate the thought of me and the surprise. *Don Freese*

Thank you to the UMW for all of the little gifts that they bring. And a special thank you to the anonymous giver for the gift of stamps. Everything is appreciated so very much. God bless you all! *Charlotte Ring*

Thank you so much for the thoughtful remembrances from the UMW—the May Day and Thanksgiving surprises were amazing and creative. I am so thankful to be remembered. *Maxine Enfield*

Thank you to the women of our church who have made and delivered cheer to us in this difficult time. Much appreciated! *Bev Humphrey*

Thank you very much for the Halloween and Thanksgiving treats. We enjoyed them both. It's always nice to hear from our friends at church, especially now that we are not able to attend service. God bless you all. Love in Christ, *Sadie & Bob Echelbarger*



On October 15, 2020 the Wesley United Methodist Men's Club met for their regular meeting. As a part of this meeting the men discussed the long ongoing issue of attendance and officer appointments. Over the years it has been increasingly difficult to entice enough guys to come to the monthly meetings. As a result, some of the guys have been wearing the same officer hat multiple times.

Rather than disband the Men's club entirely, a suggestion was made and approved to hold meetings 'as needed' or at least quarterly. In an effort to also relieve the Wesley United Methodist Women, who generously cook for us, it was approved to hold our meetings at a restaurant.

**Our next meeting will be at Village Court January 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30.**

*Mark Harrington, President, Treasurer and Secretary.*



Offering envelopes for the first quarter of 2021 are available for pick-up in the entryway. If you are unable to pick up your envelopes and would like to have them mailed, please contact the office.

**Any donations to Wesley that you wish to have credited to 2020 must be received in the office by 10:00 AM on December 31.**

Donations received after that time will be credited to 2021.

End-of-the-year giving statements will be ready for pick-up in the entryway beginning January 8, 2021.



**January**

- 1 Orville Alverson
- 4 Carlynn Grupp, Teresa Kittleson, Jeffrey Skogen
- 6 Bruce Bailey
- 9 Brian Lockwood
- 12 Eric Gogerty, David Brownmiller, Sam Skogen
- 13 *John & JoAnn McCallum*
- 15 Susan Dixon
- 16 Devvy Waslick, Dorothy Brady
- 17 DeAnn Halligan, Robert Redfern
- 19 Ken Gerbig, Jason Dannen
- 20 Iona Nuehring, Charlotte Ring
- 21 Audrey Olson
- 24 Pam Erickson
- 29 Phyllis Preftakes, Dennis Phillips
- 30 *Ken & JoAnn Gerbig*
- 31 John Halligan, Patty Strottman

**Year of Giving Back: January 2021**

As we start a new year, many continue to struggle with unmet needs, Mason City has many agencies that reach out to help those in need. This month let's help those agencies serve others.

For January, we will be collecting toilet paper, paper towels, laundry soap, dish soap, disinfectant and other cleaning supplies. You may leave your donations in the church entryway.

We will also continue to collect food each month for Mohawk Market and the Hawkeye Harvest Food Bank. Donations may be left in the designated boxes in the entryway.

*"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

2 Corinthians 9:7

**Wesley Financial Report**

12/4: \$4595  
12/18: \$7186





**Hospital Ins & Outs:**

*(Due to HIPAA regulations, we can only publish names of those who have given their consent, either by letting the church and/or pastor know or through the hospital chaplain.)*

**Condolences:** to the friends and family of Pete Ferleman who passed away on 12-4-2020.

**Prayer Request:** Mariah Barrett, who has been battling cancer, has now been diagnosed with Covid-19. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

**Council Discretionary Fund Established**

The Grace United Methodist Council has decided to establish the Council Discretionary Fund to help members of the church and their immediate families who are dealing with financial issues. One thousand dollars was transferred from the Church's General Fund into the Grace Cares Fund to oversee this new mission. Any requests to Grace Cares for monetary help over \$100 will need approval by the Council, and monthly reports of this fund will be provided to the Council by a Grace Cares member.

Donations may be given to the Council Discretionary Fund at any time during the year to help other members of our church and their immediate families. If you or your immediate family is in financial need, please contact Pat Colby and let her know your situation.

Thank you for your consideration for giving to this fund.



**January**

- 3 Brent Hamilton
- 6 Cindy Sanders
- 7 Brent & Katrina Hamilton
- 10 Sally Tripp
- 11 Paul Garcia
- 13 Thomas (David) Gobeli
- 20 Arlo Hanson
- 23 Brandi Gobeli, Cree Gobeli
- 31 Patty Strotzman



GRACE & WESLEY



Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the position of Wesley/Grace secretary is now officially part-time.

Office hours are variable, but Patty will generally be in the office M-W-F mornings. Since nothing is engraved in stone, you might want to call ahead to make sure the office will be open before coming.

You can also call Patty (641-430-4726) or Pastor Craig (641-691-5447) to set up a time and we can have the church open for you.

**Wesley United Methodist Church**  
 1405 S. Pennsylvania Ave.  
 Mason City, IA 50401  
 641-423-6549 patty@mwesley.org  
 Office Hours: Variable (Please call Patty at 641-430-4726 or Pastor Craig at 641-691-5447 to arrange a time.)  
 Worship Times: Sunday, 9:00 AM  
 Facebook Livestream service

Next newsletter mailed  
 January 21, 2021.

**Grace United Methodist Church**  
 200 14th St. NW  
 Mason City, IA 50401  
 641-423-5727  
 Worship Time: Sunday, 10:30 AM











