



Westchester UMC

VOLUME IV, ISSUE I

JANUARY 2023

Martin Luther King, Jr.—A Day of Service

Each year on the third Monday in January, we honor the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a day of service. MLK Day is the only federal holiday that is also designated by Congress as a national day of service – a “day on, not a day off.” Participation in service activities has grown each year as more Americans are encouraged to provide meaningful change in their communities.

Whether service meets a tangible need, such as fixing up a school or senior center, it builds a sense of community and mutual responsibility. Service can also be donating money to a charitable cause, donating non-perishable food items to a food pantry, or putting together hygiene kits for those who are unsheltered.

No matter the choice, service empowers individuals, strengthens

communities, bridges barriers, creates solutions and moves us closer to Dr. King’s vision of a beloved community. Coretta Scott King said, “The greatest birthday gift my husband could receive is if people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds celebrated the holiday by performing individual acts of kindness through service to others.”

The Rev. Dr. King shared, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” As the U.S. Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights shares on their website, “In keeping with Dr. King’s example, let us embrace the belief that our destiny is shared and accept our obligations to each other, future generations and the

American people by strengthening the bonds that hold together the most diverse Nation on earth. Each one of us can help answer his call by pledging to love and serve.”

In a world which sadly focuses on the things that divide us, may this year be the year we focus on coming together for the mutual benefit of all. May we honor the work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and celebrate his life by ending discrimination, and dismantling the systemic racism not only in this country—but wherever people are marginalized because of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc., throughout the world. May his dream for a world where people are judged for “the content of their character” not their skin color or other superficial reasons be realized in 2023.



WHEN YOU’RE KIND TO PEOPLE, AND YOU PAY ATTENTION, YOU MAKE A FIELD OF COMFORT AROUND THEM, AND YOU GET IT BACK—THE GOLDEN RULE MEETS THE LAW OF KARMA MEETS MURPHY’S LAW.

- ANNE LAMOTT

Dates to Remember . . .

01/01—New Year’s Day

Communion will be Served
8:00 am—Zoom Breakfast Church
10:00 am—In Person Worship

01/04

6:30 pm—The Gathering

01/08

8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church
10 am—In Person Worship

01/10—6:30 pm—Zoom Small Group Signs and Wonders

1/11—7:30 am—Prayer Check In

1/14

10:30 am—Kids Drum Circle

1/15

8:00 am—Zoom Breakfast Church
10:00 am—In Person Worship

1/16—MLK, Jr. Day

Church Office will be closed

01/17—6:30 pm—Zoom Small Group Signs and Wonders

01/18—7:30 am Prayer Check In

01/22

8:00 am—Zoom Breakfast Church
10:00 am—In Person Worship

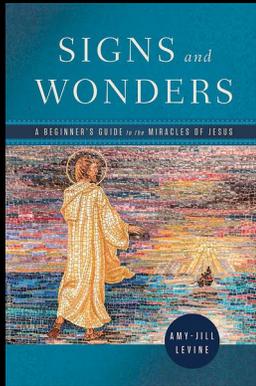
01/24—6:30 p.m., Zoom Small Group Signs and Wonders

01/25—7:30 am Prayer Check In

01/29

8:00 am—Zoom Breakfast Church
10:00 am—In Person Worship

Signs and Wonders Small Group



“For a new year to bring you something new, make a move, like a butterfly tearing its cocoon! Make a move!” - Mehmet Murat Ildan



In “Signs and Wonders: a Beginners Guide to Miracles,” author Amy Jill Levine explores selected miracles of Jesus in historical and theological context. For each miracle, we will discuss not only how past witnesses would have understood the events, but also how we can draw meaning from Jesus’ words and actions.

Rather than focusing on whether or not these miracles really happened—we will explore them as stories rich in detail, in resonance with Israel’s Scriptures (the Christian Old Testament), and in emotional and spiritual truth.

“Signs and Wonders” will dis-

cuss:

- Take Up Your Pallet and Walk (Mark 2)
- Stilling the Storm (Mark 4)
- The Feeding of the Five Thousand (or More) (Luke 9)
- A Bleeding Woman and a Dead Girl (Matthew 9)
- A Two-Stage Miracle (Mark 8)
- The Rising of Lazarus (John 11)

“Signs and Miracles” begins on Tuesday, January 10th and continues through Tuesday, February 14th, at 6:30

p.m.

Books can be purchased at amazon.com, Barnes & Noble bookstores, or you can pick up a book at the church—the church has a limited number of books, so be sure to reserve your copy by emailing Pastor Lyda at Lyda@wumcla.org. Books are \$12.00, but no one will be turned away for a lack of funds.

Welcome to a new year—filled with “Signs and Wonders!”

Kids Drum Circle in January!

A drum circle is an activity where people come together in a circle and, led by a facilitator, drum, sing and create music together using a wide range of percussion instruments.

Drumming is a natural expression of who we are. In ancient civilizations, drumming created a sense of community and belonging—and it does the same today!

WUMC is happy to offer a family-friendly, kids drum circle from 10:30 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. on second Saturdays of the month.

Our Second Saturday Kids Drum Circles will be held

at the church in the Fellowship Hall.

Our Kids Drum Circles are FREE and engaging and fun for all ages. The average kid ages are 2 to 10 years old. No reservations needed—just show up! Drums and percussion provided—no experience required.

While we do monitor the volume, playing drums indoors can have moments of louder volume. We offer noise reduction headphones for the kids and earplugs.

Children may not be dropped off—parents/guardians must stay with

children.

Our Kids Drum Circles are facilitated by Pastor Lyda. Pastor Lyda was an early childhood music teacher for many years, and is a trained HealthRhythms, Beat the Odds and Village Music Circles drum circle facilitator.

Come and be a part of the fun on **Saturday, January 14th at 10:30 a.m.!**



SAD: Spiritual Affective Disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder happens when a lack of sunlight affects our moods and our ability to cope effectively. *Spiritual Affective Disorder* can also be a condition when we've had prolonged stress and life is disturbingly uncertain. What is our faithful response to our strained mental health? What if everyday life activities could become spiritual practices—deepening our experience of a meaningful life and helping us shine a light on the “blahs?”

Instead of focusing on typical spiritual practices as an antidote to our *Spiritual Affective Disorder*, we will simply focus on how everyday life activities could become spiritual practices.

Our themes for this series are:

- Flip the Switch
- Soothe a Savage
- Lighten Up
- Make My Day
- Little Altars Everywhere
- Walk this Way

- Leave Room for Dessert
- Get Up and Don't be Afraid

May we discover acts of kindness, acts of observation and gratitude, and simple things like taking a walk, which can all lead to a deeper awareness of the divine, and a closer connection with God while also having a positive impact on mental wellness.

2022—a Year in Review

2022 was a busy year here at Westchester UMC. Here are a few of the ways we engaged in loving and caring for others:

Suicide Prevention & Awareness Programs

Once again, Westchester UMC was a proud sponsor of Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services' Alive Together: Uniting to Prevent Suicide. We donated \$2,500 to Alive Together, and raised

\$1,447 this Christmas season for suicide prevention programs! Great job everyone!

LAX Food Pantry

We donated Bag-It-Up Holiday Meals for families in need, in addition to donating \$460. Team Westchester UMC was also active raising money for the **Westside Food Bank**.

The Giving Tree

During the month of December, our Giving Tree stood ready to offer a gift of warmth through donated socks, gloves, scarves, etc., and the gift of food, through gift cards to Subway and McDonalds.

Messy Church

We sent home Take-Home Messy Church kits each month to families in the community, and this year, Puppy Pastor Molly handed out over 80 Treat Bags on Halloween!



A Year in Review—Continued!

WUMC Crafters Group

The Crafters group was busy this year—they participated in the Westchester Arts & Music Block Party and had a table at the St. Jerome Holiday Craft Faire.

Lending a Helping Hand

Eduardo, an asylum seeker from Venezuela, found this church

after immigration officials put him on a plane from Texas to LAX with only the clothes on his back, his phone, an empty backpack and his entry papers. After two days of sleeping on the streets, he found us. Through the generosity of this congregation, we fed Eduardo, gave him toiletries and a jacket, money for food, and actually

got him to Utah, where he had an offer of work and where his immigration appointment was set. We are still a part of Eduardo's new life here in the U.S., and we were able to get him a needed work permit.

Throughout the year, WUMC offers financial assistance, food, and care to those who are struggling.

We look forward to what 2023 will bring!

**Westchester
United Methodist Church**

www.wumcla.org

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We are a Reconciling church!
ALL are welcome here.



From Pastor Lyda . . .

The Magi, or Wise Ones, traveled so many nights, eyes fixed upward until finally, they discovered where the star had come to rest. Armed with their knowledge and a vision, off they go – without a lot of directions. As Garrison Keillor once said, "If you get your guidance by following a star, the directions are going to be a little bit vague."

God was perhaps a bit vague when the Magi felt God's call to move them into a journey that was probably a bit dangerous, and a bit risky, but would bring their past into their future.

I sometimes wonder what would have happened if the Magi decided not to make the journey. Maybe it wouldn't have affected Jesus' story much, but what about their own lives? The lives of those around them when they came back home after worshipping Jesus? The Magi could not and would not have

been able to follow the star if they hadn't had the knowledge of the skies. They might not have known where they were going, but their past experience gave them the keys to their future. They wouldn't have found Jesus if their past didn't push them toward their future and a journey of discovery, of newness, of transformation – all led by a star that didn't come with Siri or a GPS system.

What about us today? How does our past link us to our future? How can we find new beginnings and be better than we were before? How can our faith be a starting point for life beyond our limitations?

Each new year, each New Year's resolution (whether we actually keep them or not!) calls to us to look beyond ourselves, beyond our imaginings, beyond our fears and our wants, to what God is calling us to, where God is calling us to go, and who God is calling us to be. God makes all things new –

God called the or Magi or Wise Ones or kings – however you want to name them – on a journey. A journey that we too are called to take.

Our transformation this year, as a church, as followers of Christ, calls us to build on our experiences, our mistakes, our challenges, our failures, our successes, and follow the stars that God will place in the sky for us – stars that will lead us to the future that is God's dream for us.

Epiphany is more than a celebration of the Wise Ones visit to the child Jesus. The light of God's glory calls each one of us on a pilgrimage of discovery, of challenge and of risk.

I wonder . . . where will the risky business of following stars take us this year?