

Thanksgiving & Christmas 2020

Sharing the Story

Wesley Freedom: Special Edition

Magazine



Lord Jesus,

We typically long for festivity and song, ripped open paper bearing grand surprises. This Thanksgiving and Christmas we long for you, for the song of joy you would sing over us, for the ways you alone can open us to the surprises of your love in our midst. Come Lord Jesus, fill our homes, heal our lives, bring us towards nothing less than you.

Amen.



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”

John 1:14 - The Message



A Pastoral Letter

Christ Comes Home for Christmas

Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Jennifer Smith

Every year for as long as I can remember, Thanksgiving has been defined by an exceedingly long table in my mother's house filled with laughter, family, and an obscene amount of mashed potatoes. Like so many of you, when I think about the upcoming holidays, I get a bit anxious. My Mom and Grandma are high risk so we know things can't be "normal." This is the conclusion we come to daily in 2020; we will have to find a new way. For the Weddle/Smith family there is talk of setting up café tables in a barn. That rearrangement brings both sorrow and a spark of anticipation.

As you begin to consider how you and your family will celebrate the holidays this year, know that you are in our prayers. Pastor Ian and I both know personally how tiresome it can be to have to find a new way for nearly everything. Recently I spoke to our church counselor and he reminded me that the journey to peace, especially in seasons of grief or disruption, is found through prayer, controlling what can be controlled, and embracing what *can* be (instead of dwelling on what *can't*).

As the holidays approach, know that we are with you, we care for you, and we are planning for a season which we pray will bring the hope, peace, joy, and love of Jesus into your life and your home. While Thanksgiving and Christmas are often celebrated with grand festivity, this year we focus on the way Christ came to be with us. He did not come with pageant and feast - Jesus came simply, birthed by Mary in a barn, visited by small groups of shepherds. As translated in the Message, "The word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood." The transformation Jesus brings - darkness to light, despair to hope, anxiety to peace - can come even in 2020 - especially in 2020.

As you journey through these meaningful seasons we will seek to go along side you providing opportunities for worship, centering and connection. Our prayer is that while there will be less "going" to Christmas there will be more space for Jesus to be welcomed into our lives and homes.

May God fill your hearts and homes with peace and Joy,

Rev. Jenny (and Associate Pastor Ian)

To keep you centered on Jesus through out the week we will continue offering daily devotions.

The November

Family Gratitude Guide

is the back cover of this Magazine and gives you 20 days of scriptures and activities to help gratitude grow in your home.

All Saints Sunday, November 1

This year so many of us have lost loved ones without comforting spaces to grieve. All of our services this week will give us opportunity to grieve together, name our loved ones who have passed, and proclaim our hope for resurrection from grief and death. We encourage you to invite others who are grieving to join you for worship or share the service with them online as a healing gift.



*Outdoors 9:30 am, 11:00 am & 6:00 pm. Sanctuary 8:00 am. Online always.
This is the last week of our fall worship schedule*

Luminary Walk of Saints, November 1st and 2nd

Luminaries celebrating the lives of our saints will illuminate a trail around our buildings on Sunday, November 1st and Monday, November 2nd, between 5pm-9pm. You may sign up for a start time to walk the luminary trail on the website or by calling the office (410-795-2777).

Our Winter Worship Schedule Begins November 8th

Sundays @ 9:00 & 11:00 am Worship in the Sanctuary

These peaceful and spirit filled services will include prayer, preaching, live instrumental music and soloists from the “studio above”. Communion on 1st Sundays.

Registration is recommended for worship in the sanctuary. We can accommodate up to 100 persons at a time. Registration guarantees you have a seat. Walk-ins will only be accommodated as space allows.



Wednesday, 8:00am Morning Prayer and Communion. This small service offers space to begin your day with communion and scripture.

10:00 am Facebook Live Watch Party hosted by our pastors and friends.

Online Worship will continue to be available every week on Facebook, YouTube, the church's website (wesleyfreedom.org) and the Wesley Freedom app.

Thank-Full Gathering & Celebration

Sunday, November 15, 2020, 2-4 pm

Our entire church family and friends are invited to gather and celebrate our many blessings. Together we will be **THANK-FULL**. Praise God through music, movement and fun fall activities.



Registration is available on the church website.



Bring donations to support our

Blessing Closet: laundry detergent and paper towels

Food Pantry: protein (peanut butter, tuna, chicken) or other canned goods

OPERATION: HOMECOMING

Mission

TO KEEP YOU SAFE
TO SHARE GRACE



Goals

Make the risk of COVID-19 transmission as low as possible.
Allow indoor worship & ministry to resume inside.

Objectives

- Establish safety guidelines and policies for indoor activities [Status: Completed]
 - Mandatory Masking
 - Room capacity limits to allow 6-feet of physical distance
 - Review of all activities by COVID Taskforce
- Install hand sanitizer stations around the church campus [Status: Completed]
- Increase cleaning to include 2x daily disinfecting of all common-touch surfaces & disinfection of room surfaces after a gathering in the space [Status: Completed]
- Purchase of electrostatic fogger to disinfect all sanctuary pews and furnishings effectively and efficiently [Status: Completed]
- Purchase of hospital-grade portable air sanitization units to clean the air during & after use [Status: Completed]
- Modification of Sanctuary HVAC system for increased filtration [Status: In Progress]

Help us make Operation: Homecoming a success!

Outdoor Christmas Celebrations

Drive-Thru Nativity

Sunday, December 13th, 5pm-8pm



All are invited to live the story of Christ's Birth at our Drive-Thru Nativity. Enjoy the Christmas story with cookies, milk and carols. Youth, adults and families with children are needed for character and hospitality roles. Contact Taylor Boone (tboone@wesleyfreedom.org) if interested in serving.



Advent Fest

Sunday, November 29, 2020 2-4 pm

All are welcome at this intergenerational event

Advent is a time of anticipation and celebration. Advent Fest will launch the season of Advent with Advent Wreath making and resources to guide you through the days leading to Christmas so that you will be ready to welcome Christ.

Receive an Advent Wreath form, Advent candles, a Christ Candle and assorted greens and decorations to complete a beautiful wreath for your home.

- You choose an indoor or outdoor work space.
- Helping hands to guide you
- Carols to enjoy



Registration available on the website.

Youth Ministries Connect Indoors *and* Online!

High School and Middle School Ministries will meet on Zoom every week throughout the winter. Twice a month, High School and Middle School ministries will be invited to meet in the sanctuary to enjoy worship, stage games, door prizes, and more! Indoor gatherings will require masks and students will be socially distanced in pre-marked seating in the sanctuary.

If you are interested in attending and/or helping with indoor Youth Gatherings or the Drive-Thru Nativity, please contact our Director of Youth Ministries, Taylor Boone at tboone@wesleyfreedom.org. Be sure to also head over to the Youth Ministry page of our website to subscribe to the Youth Ministry weekly emails!



INCARNATION

REDISCOVERING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTMAS

This Advent we will explore the mystery and discover the power of the Incarnation. We will ask, “Why did God put on human flesh?”, “What is the purpose of the Incarnation?”, “How are we meant to respond to God’s coming to us in Jesus?” and “How does Jesus transform our lives today?”.

Pastors’ Advent Bible Study

Join us in-person or online as we read and discuss Adam Hamilton’s new book, *Incarnation: Rediscovering The Significance Of Christmas*. In these judgment-free discussions for persons at all points on the journey of faith, we hope that everyone can come away with an answer to the question “**Why should Christmas matter to me?**”

Tuesday, 7:00 pm (Online, Begins Dec 1st)

Wednesday, 11:00 am (Online, Series begins December 2nd)

Wednesday, 7:00 pm (Location: Room 500 (CLC) in-person, Begins Dec 2nd)

Can’t make it to one of these discussion groups? Check out our full list of online and in-person classes and small groups at wesleyfreedom.org/small-groups

Advent 2020 with Wesley Freedom: A New Devotional



Continue your habit of daily scripture reading & reflection this Advent with a brand-new daily devotional written by the members & friends of Wesley Freedom for the people of Wesley Freedom!

Find a scripture passage for each day which complements the week’s worship focus and a brief reflection from someone within our church family.

Print copies will be available on November 29th.

The devotion will be available on Facebook, wesleyfreedom.org and through our Wesley Weekly email. Sign up for each day’s devotional delivered straight to your inbox every morning by visiting wesleyfreedom.org/devotion.

“CHRIST COMES HOME FOR CHRISTMAS EVE”

DECEMBER 24

Each year we long for the culmination of our Advent waiting on Christmas Eve. We anticipate the sense of holy wonder as candles are lit and *Silent Night* is sung. This year we will remember how Jesus arrived on that first Christmas night. We will gather like shepherds to hear the good news, and cherish Jesus who is born to save us. We will sing *Silent Night* loud as if we are among the angel chorus as we pass the light of a candle. This year though the holy encounter is not held in a sanctuary but brought into your living-room.



Our services will be available by 9am on Christmas Eve morning on our website, Facebook page, Church app and YouTube channel. While we will miss gathering in person, we believe this is the safest way to share the hope of Jesus with the thousands whom we typically welcome. We encourage you to build your Christmas Eve around your Christmas Eve worship time. Gather your family in Christmas finest or pajamas and make sure you have candles to light.

Our prayer is to reach TWO THOUSAND TWENTY homes this Christmas Eve. Help us spread the invitation by inviting friends and family to view with you or by claiming a time to watch together. Share the service promo video with everyone you know on social media and in person.

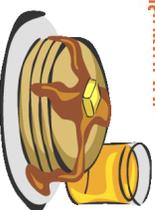
Small Sanctuary Services will be offered at 9:00am and 11:00am for those who cannot access the Christmas Eve service at home and those who live alone and seek this opportunity to share Christmas in community. Pre-registration is required.



FAMILY GRATITUDE GUIDE 2020

November

- Read the scripture together
- Think about the FOCUS
- Do the activity as a family
- Say a prayer of thanks

SUN: WORSHIP	MON: COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS	TUE: SONG OF GRATITUDE	WED: GRATITUDE VIDEO	THU: EXPRESS YOURSELF	FRI: THANKSGIVING PRAYER	SAT: BE A BLESSING
<p>08-Matt 6:19-21</p> <p>Go to Worship (Online or In-person)</p> <p>FOCUS: "Treasures on earth can pass away. What God gives lasts forever."</p>	<p>09-Gen 12:1-3</p> <p>Talk around your breakfast or dinner table: What has God given you so that you can help others? Name a good thing about you!</p>	<p>10-Deut 26:4-11</p> <p>Listen to the song "Thankful" by Shawna Edwards here: https://tinyurl.com/GratitudeSong2</p>	<p>11-Matt 16:13-18</p> <p>Watch the gratitude video at wesleyfreedom.org/childrens-ministries</p> 	<p>12-Gen 1:26-31</p> <p>God made the whole world. Go on a fall scavenger hunt and say thank you to God for everything you find. https://tinyurl.com/FallSeawFUMC</p>	<p>13-1Chron 16:8-9</p> <p>Pray through song and motions with "Give Thanks" https://tinyurl.com/GratitudeSong1</p>	<p>14-1Chron 16:34</p> <p>Do something kind for a family member. Help fold laundry, fix dinner, dust, and/or pick up.</p> 
<p>15-Psalm 126:4-6</p> <p>Go to Worship (Online or In-Person)</p> <p>FOCUS: "We plant seeds in tough times so that we can keep living as God's children in the future."</p>	<p>16-2 Cor 9:6-7</p> <p>Talk around your breakfast or dinner table: Where has God given you more than you need? What can you share with others?</p>	<p>17-2 Cor 9:8-10</p> <p>Listen to the song "Thankful" from Juicebox Jukebox here: https://tinyurl.com/GratitudeSong3</p>	<p>18- Luke 3:10-11</p> <p>Watch the gratitude video at wesleyfreedom.org/childrens-ministries</p>	<p>19-Phil 4:6</p> <p>Where did you see God in your life today? Draw, paint, build or make it.</p>	<p>20-Luke 21:1-4</p> <p>Pray this prayer - For food in a world where many walk in hunger; For faith in a world where many walk in fear; For friends in a world where many walk alone; We give you thanks, O Lord. Amen.</p>	<p>21-1 John 4:19</p> <p>Younger: Make a card for a neighbor Older: Pick up trash and litter in your neighborhood or park.</p>
<p>22-2 Cor 9:10-12</p> <p>Go to Worship (Online or In-Person)</p> <p>FOCUS: "All the good things we have come from God. Our generosity is a way to say "Thank You" to God for his generosity."</p>	<p>23-2 Thess 1:3-4</p> <p>Talk around your breakfast or dinner table: Name three people you are thankful for</p> 	<p>24-Psalm 100:1-2</p> <p>Listen to the song "Thankful" from Roar VBS here - https://tinyurl.com/GratitudeSong4</p>	<p>25-Psalm 100:3</p> <p>Watch the gratitude video at wesleyfreedom.org/childrens-ministries</p>	<p>26-Psalm 100:4-5</p> <p>Create a thankful tree. Find a branch and bring it inside. Put it in a sturdy container. Cut out leaves, write things you are thankful for and hang the leaves on the tree.</p> 	<p>27-1 Thess 5:18</p> <p>Pray this prayer: Dear God, if I cannot be brilliant, let me be kind. If I cannot change the world, let me inspire just one other to do so. If I cannot give away riches, let me be loving. Let me be known for kindness, for it is the greatest glory.</p>	<p>28-Psalm 41:1-3</p> <p>Sort through your toys, books and clothes and find useful items to donate.</p> 

Our Mission at Wesley Freedom United Methodist Church: To make disciples of Jesus Christ who share the story of God's grace.
Our Vision: To see the lives of people in our community forever changed by God's grace.