

January
2025

Volume 74 Issue 1
January 5, 2024

wesleymonumental.org

THE MONUMENTAL MESSENGER



Life at Wesley



Our Refugee Ministry serves newly arriving families, and one family attained U.S. citizenship after diligent study for the citizenship exam. In the most recent election, the new citizens voted for the first time!



Friends singing "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee" in church.



Choristers singing "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light" in worship.



Urban Hope children's supper will take place again in February: all ages are welcome to help serve the meal!



On Veterans' Day, November 11, we were thrilled 49 Wesley friends helped to sack groceries for needy children and youth at People of Action Caring for Kids (PACK).



Eli's Place friends presenting their annual Thanksgiving program.



From Ben's Desk

Ben Martin, Senior Pastor
912-232-0191, Ext. 216, ben@wesleymonumental.org

2025 *Happy New Year!*

A year comes and goes so quickly now, but a lot can change in a year. At Wesley, we entered 2024 focusing heavily on renovating our Education Building, filling some important staff positions, and the potential pitfalls of a denominational divide. Now, we enter 2025 with that project complete, the staff assembled, and the denominational divide behind us. It is time to focus our energy and attention on other things. The renovation of the Education Building was the culmination of almost two decades of long-term planning. The staff members and navigation of the denominational conflict were a product of our last strategic planning process. This means 2025 is a time when we need to begin to think ahead once again about who we are as a church and what will be the focus of our time, energy, and resources.

In the first few months of this year, our staff and Administrative Board will be led in a new three-to-five-year strategic planning process. I am grateful for the expertise of Shirley Roberts, Pat Monahan, Scott Cleaveland, and Christian Swails in this process. This is a time of prayerful and thoughtful work that will help guide us in our ministry into the future. The writer of Proverbs penned these prophetic and memorable words a long time ago, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." A God-imparted vision is critically important to the success of the church, but a vision without a strategy to enable it to become a reality is no more than a moment of inspiration that comes and goes with little to show for it.

Calvin of the old comic strip "Calvin and Hobbes" said of the new year, "The problem with the future is that it keeps turning into the present." Just as 2024 came and went quickly, 2025 will do the same. And when the future turns into the present with no preparation and planning, we tend to not be ready for it. The same is true with our own spiritual lives; we need a strategic plan for who we want to become in our relationship with God and each other. Maybe the beginning of this new year is a time for a personal spiritual strategic planning retreat. If you are interested in that kind of intentionality in your spiritual life, let us know, and we can help.



Come Meet Bishop Dease, our New Bishop of South Georgia

Reception at Garden City UMC
Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.

An informal gathering offering an opportunity for the Bishop to meet church members of the Coastal District and for us to get to know her. Dessert will be served, and it will be a good opportunity to connect with other United Methodists. We will gather at Garden City United Methodist Church, 62 Varndoe Ave, Garden City, GA 31408.



Senior Adults & Pastoral Care

Carolyn Hale Cubbedge, Senior Adults & Pastoral Care
912-232-0191 Ext. 202,
carolynhalecubbedge@gmail.com



Merry Makers

Merry Makers, Wesley's senior adult fellowship, will meet on Monday, January 13, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. in the Parlor of Oliver Hall. Marcia Thompson of Mrs. Wilkes' Restaurant will be the speaker. Please make your reservation by calling the church office or seeing Carolyn Hale Cubbedge. Lunch will be served. Cost is \$7.00.



Wesley Meet & Mingle

Ghost Pirates and Zoo!

Wesley's next Meet and Mingle event is on January 5, when we attend a **Ghost Pirates** game. Carolyn Hale Cubbedge will have printed tickets for those who purchased them. See her prior to January 5 to get yours.

On December 6, the Ghost Pirates agreed to hold another 50 tickets for us, so we have been granted an extension to purchase tickets. See Carolyn Hale Cubbedge ASAP if you want to go. Tickets are \$30 each.

The Meet and Mingle trip to **Hope Ranch Zoo** has been rescheduled for Saturday, February 8. Watch the bulletin for details.



Children's Ministry

Charli Weeks, Director of Children's Ministry
912-232-0191 Ext. 225,
charli@wesleymonumental.org

Look! We've moved in!



We are excited to be back on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the newly renovated Education Building!

Holiday Fun!



Eli's Place friends presenting their Thanksgiving program.



On Christmas Baking Day, Wesley 1st-3rd graders had fun baking Christmas treats and assembling gingerbread houses.



Eli's Place parents enjoyed stopping by for coffee and spending time with their babies prior to Christmas!





Wesley Gardens Retreat

Micah Sprunger, Retreat Director
912-441-7578, micah@wesleygardensretreat.com
wesleygardensretreat.com

New Year Greetings from the Wesley Gardens Family!

2024 was a rich year of growth at the Gardens, with the Lord providing a small "family" of us to steward these sacred spaces and provide hospitality for the needs of Wesley Monumental, as well as the hundreds of retreat guests who come our way each year.

As our lifestyles become increasingly hurried, our appetites for distraction become insatiable, and we are pulled out of harmony with our true selves and God as our true source for Life; Abbie & I are so thankful to steward Wesley Gardens for the sake of all these increasingly vital reasons. In the ten years we've been here, we've seen the hunger for and application of retreat ministry continue to rise. Thanks be to God for this gorgeous property and all its offerings!

Whether a family stroll on the trails, personal prayer on a bench, or couples kayaking on the river, we'd love to see you out here! To visit, simply drop us an email at hello@wesleygardensretreat.com.

A Peace filled year to each of you. - Micah



Photo from left to right: Phillip McClure (Property Steward), Kate Spanos (Gardening), Micah Sprunger (Retreat Director), Kyle Seeger (Aesthetic Maintenance) Not pictured: Christian Swails (Reservations) & Ema



Fourth Friday Retreats —January 24th

Prayer & Solitude Retreat

Craving set apart time and space to connect with God? If so, you might find this retreat meaningful. It's free and requires no previous retreat experience, offering a mix of solitude and time with Scripture (via Daily Office & Lectio Divina). You can shape the retreat as your soul needs it—we'll simply provide an optional framework. Spiritual Direction with a local pastor is available throughout. For those desiring a bit of caffeination before meditation, freshly roasted coffee will start pouring at 8:45 a.m. in the Main House, and the retreat thereafter from 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Following the retreat, lunch is served for any who'd like to join! Friday, January 24th. All weary souls welcome.

Artist Retreat

There is a new monthly collaboration with a favorite local artist, Allison Hall of Small Creative. Following the Prayer & Solitude Retreat, lunch is provided, and then Allison will guide a retreat for creatives—no cost, and all are welcome. (If you're a SCAD student and need a ride, please let us know.) Lunch is served at 12:45 p.m. with the guided retreat from 1:30 p.m.- 3:00 p.m. "Structured time" ends at 3:00 p.m., but you're welcome to linger and continue creating on your own until sunset.



Spiritual Direction

Christian Swails, Wesley Gardens Spiritual Director
912-217-8646, hello@cocreationlife.com
cocreationlife.com, christianswails.com

Spiritual Direction 2025

Life is hard. The pace we are forced to move at in 2025 is not the pace of the soul. You may be interested in Spiritual Direction, if you are:

- ◆ feeling anxious
- ◆ dealing with conflict
- ◆ needing discernment
- ◆ holding big questions
- ◆ or just looking for someone to talk to about what's really going on inside

Christian Swails is a trained Spiritual Director with a heart for nonjudgmental listening and self-discovery through conversation. This is a ministry from our church to you. We care about what's going on in your life. Your questions, doubts, fears, anger, joy, ideas about the future - they are welcome here. And we are honored to hold space for you to process them confidentially.

Christian can meet you at Wesley Gardens, Wesley Monumental Church, or over Zoom. Scan the QR code to schedule a chat. Peace to you in this new year.





2025 Wesley Gardens Spiritual Formation

It's a new year and we have some incredible offerings each week at Wesley Gardens Retreat, including a **book club on the 4th Sunday of every month!** This is a place to learn and practice some ancient spiritual practices that have cultivated a deep inner life of peace, healing, and clarity for disciples of Jesus for thousands of years. No need to come every week, just pop in and check out one of the practices below that you feel drawn to. Each week is a new practice so you can join in anytime. This schedule will continue throughout the year.

1st Sunday (every month) Christian Meditation (begins January 5th)

"Be still and know that I am God." This invitation is a courageous act of resistance against the nonstop noise and chaos that surrounds our lives in modern day America. Quieting the outside noise is one challenge, but what about the noise on the inside? Does your mind run constantly? Do you experience anxiety or frustration regularly? This has become the norm in our society. Christian Meditation - referred to as "Centering Prayer" teaches you how to:

- ◆ Quiet your restless mind
- ◆ Experience the presence and peace of God
- ◆ Become a non-anxious presence to the people around you

3rd Sunday (every month) God in Nature / Reflective Writing (begins January 19th)

Eugene Peterson referred to nature as "God's Big Book." There are things we as humans need to learn that can only be found by contemplating creation. There is nothing in nature that is a facade. A tree is a tree, a bird is a bird, a stone is a stone. And we need desperately to be surrounded by that level of integrity to be reminded who we are. God speaks through creation. This practice gives you permission to be surrounded by and hear from God in a way that may be new or intuitive to you. God in Nature teaches you to:

- ◆ See your life in the context of something bigger
- ◆ Learn the rhythms and tendencies of the natural world
- ◆ Hear from God through his creation

2nd Sunday (every month) Lectio Divina (begins January 12th)

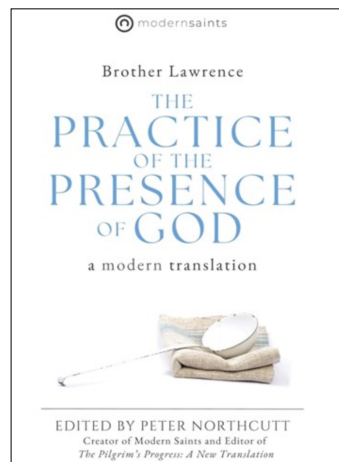
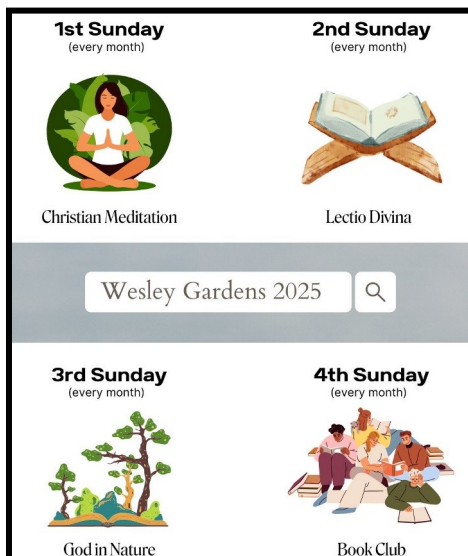
Lectio Divina is Latin for 'divine reading.' This is less about reading scripture and more about letting scripture read you. We will take a small passage of scripture and read it slowly, several times. This is not about historical context or rational interpretation. This practice is designed specifically to encounter the presence of God through your imagination, your senses, and invitations you may experience by the public reading of wisdom literature. Lectio Divina teaches you how to:

- ◆ Engage the Bible in a fresh, contemplative way
- ◆ Learn how to encounter God in scripture
- ◆ Hear direct invitations from God for your week

4th Sunday (every month) Book Club (begins January 26th)

There are loads of amazing literary works on understanding and experiencing the spiritual life that have been passed down through centuries from saints, mystics, poets, and pilgrims. Much of this literature is lost to us in the modern market of short attention publishing. Some of it is mistakenly thought to be difficult or obscure. We will journey through these works together making them accessible and applying their timeless wisdom to our modern lives. The Book Club introduces you:

- ◆ Classic spiritual literature that people reference but rarely read
- ◆ Wisdom that has been passed down through the centuries
- ◆ The vibrant tapestry of spiritual practices and experiences in our faith tradition.



Our first book club starts on **January 26th.**

We will be reading:

The Practice of the Presence of God (written in 1692)
by Brother Lawrence

If interested in joining, please email Christian Swails at christian@cocreationlife.com (or just show up)

We will be using this translation by Modern Saints





Evangelism & Missions

Nelle Bordeaux, Outreach & New Members
912-234-9245, tbordeaux@prodigy.net

Welcome, New Members!

Our next New Member Course will be Sundays, January 19 and 26, at 10:00 a.m. both Sundays, with the class joining as a group on January 26. Nursery provided. Please call the church office to sign up, 912-232-0191. We are thankful the following joined during November.



Celeste Kenney and Matthew Pietrzykowski

Celeste and Matthew are engaged to be married. She was born in Cordele, Georgia and graduated from high school in Ocilla, as her father, Jim Kenney, is a retired United Methodist pastor who served churches throughout the South Georgia Conference, who now lives in Brunswick. Matthew was born in Portland, Oregon. Both felt instantly at home when they visited Wesley, and already they participate in Wednesday night supper and Bible study. He works in the same industry with his shepherds, Clayton and Chris, as Matthew works for Kraton, and they work for Control Southern.

Shepherds: Donessa and Clayton Gattis and children, Laurel and Monroe Gattis, and Chris Donegan



Laura Carroll and Nick Sartino and daughter, Naomi Sartino

Already Laura is active in the Young Mothers' Bible Study, and the entire family packed groceries for needy school children two days in a row at People of Action Caring for Kids (PACK). Laura grew up in Florida and went to New York University for graduate school in publishing, and Nick grew up outside Nashville in Smyrna, Tennessee. Nick served in the military in the Marine Corps. Their daughter, Naomi, turned two in November.

*Shepherds: Ashley Mays Henry and Aaron Henry
Naomi's Shepherd: Colsen Mays Henry*



Join a Bible Study in the New Year!

♦ Young Mothers' Bible Study Starts a New Topic in January

Our subject will be "What Children Teach Us about God," suggested by our own Jenna Watts! Please join us for this new series during January and February, Tuesdays, 9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m., Bible Buddies nursery provided by fabulous Carmine Cowart and Del Muller. Please sign up with Nelle, tbordeaux@prodigy.net.

♦ Thursday Noon Bible Study via Zoom

"All about Paul," presently studying 1 Corinthians, sign up with Nelle, tbordeaux@prodigy.net.



Mission Team to Santa Elena, Honduras, February 7-14, 2025

We have a team of eleven headed back to Central America to work with Mission on the Move programming with children while constructing three houses with the Central American Ministry in Outreach. Thank you to the generous funders who have paid for the home construction. There will be other ways that the congregation can get involved, such as through children's shoe donations, our annual Spanky's box lunch fundraiser, and praying for the mission of the team. This is the first of three mission teams with Mission on the Move from Wesley Monumental. The youth group is going to Tapachula, Mexico, July 9-16, while Malinda and Newman Smith will serve as house parents for the month of July in Santa Elena, Honduras. If you are interested in joining, supporting, or simply have questions, contact Scott Cleaveland at 912-598-8278.



Music

Monica Dekle, Director of Music & Organist
912-232-0191 Ext. 213, monica@wesleymonumental.org



Savannah Trombone Choir leading worship



We are so thankful for our new choir space!!



Youth Ministry

Maggie Hatchett, Director of Student Ministries
912-580-7553, maggie@wesleymonumental.org

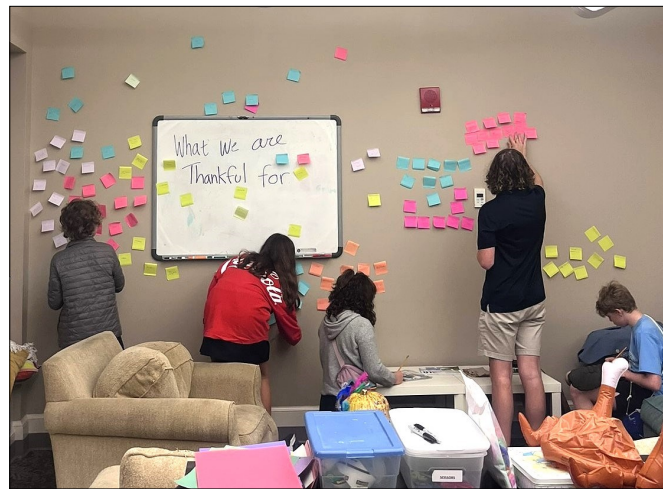
YOUTH! Join our BAND to get all the updates and see what things you may have missed! Scan the QR code to join!



We have been having such a great time in youth this past month. We got to share the things we are thankful for on Wednesday night, putting them on the walls and seeing how much more we could thank the Lord for. Wednesday's have been so sweet, being able to read about creation and what happened in the beginning of the Bible. The youth have been asking really great questions and learning so much.

I am so thankful we were able to go to the Encounter Retreat at Epworth. The theme this year was Real Talk. We got to talk about the things that we have questions about when it comes to our faith. We worshiped with other youth groups, discussed the hard things, had an open mic night, and explored Saint Simons.

We are looking forward to the Winter Retreat January 30 through February 2. We will be skiing in West Virginia and talking about pausing to take time for the Lord. Be sure to sign up by January 1 on the church website.





Messenger Monthly Spotlight



Youth attending
Encounter Retreat
at Epworth

