

# HILLTOPICS

WILSON MEMORIAL UNION CHURCH • WATCHUNG NJ 07069 • 908-755-5020

[WWW.WILSONMEMORIALCHURCH.ORG](http://WWW.WILSONMEMORIALCHURCH.ORG)



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

Rev. Michael Droege

Often during Lent, I find myself choosing to add something rather than taking something away. Maybe I want to add meditation or a healthy eating practice. Maybe I want to participate more fully in a good work out in the world or create a safe space for loved ones. This year I'm hearing a different call to myself and to our community – walk gently. Over the last few months, I kept hearing that phrase, calling me to **be gentle with myself**. Simplify. Breathe. I want to take the time to recognize that all of us are recovering from some kind of trauma. As each individual comes forward to take the bread and cup on communion Sunday, I can see it on our faces. We are so grateful to be together to share in the sacrament – that much is always evident. But I have become aware that all of us have been changed in some way since the 2020's began.

*I believe this is a Lenten season for us to be present in who we are – be gentle with ourselves.*

This Lent, I don't want to plan any big events or any more worship services per se. I'd like to lead us into some spaces where we can just be. I am hoping for spaces where we can come together as a church family, in small groups, and get in touch with ourselves, each other, and our faith. But I'm not going to put a bunch of things on the calendar and hope that maybe, just maybe, someone will show up. I'd like to offer a few spaces where I would be willing to show up with you and be present together. All you would have to do is respond back to me with what might feel like a space in which you would like to join me. Here are some of the opportunities of the coming season:

- **Dinner at 6:** remember those? This would be a more intimate version of our pandemic ministry.
- **Holy Smoke:** For people that like to smoke cigars and discuss theology. (I already have some that I do this with – wondering if there are others?)
- **Deconstructionists** – For those trying to find a Christian faith after institutional trauma. This would be offered online and a wide audience invited.
- **Beloved Arise** – An online space for those who are a part of the queer community or struggling with the theology surrounding queer life.
- **God on Tap** – Similar to “holy smoke” but would be curated by a member who will take us to a craft brewery.
- **Dinner and a Movie** – probably held at the manse, we would choose a film that is worth discussing.
- **Yoga** – A Lenten practice.
- **Meditation/Prayer** – online or in person. A weekly moment of contemplative prayer and meditation guided by me.
- **Campfire Night:** Lighting a fire on the manse porch (bring snacks and beverage to share).
- **Morning Coffee at POURtuga** – I would be at the new coffee shop at a designated time each week at an early hour for coffee.

If any of these items (or other spaces YOU might exist that you would like to infuse some spiritual life into) capture your interest, let me know. ([mdroege@wilsonmemorialchurch.org](mailto:mdroege@wilsonmemorialchurch.org)).

I won't put anything on the calendar per se, but if I get interest from you in these areas, we will work to create a time that works for all those interested.

The last thing that our folks need is another thing to add to the calendar. What I hope to bring to our congregation is that cultivating our faith life doesn't have to be in yet another church program, but learning how to fold spiritual thoughts and conversation into our "normal" life.

A prime example has been the work that Michelle is doing regarding children and family. We have no big "program" like Sunday School, she is simply infusing spiritual life in a simple and accessible manner. She is then posting the experiences she is having in our Friday newsletter so that families can continue the practice at home...as well as with our faith at home guides. That way, families can weave spiritual traditions and conversations in ways that are organic and meaningful. It is always that simple nurture that makes a difference – and it is making a difference to the children at Wilson.

Let our children's example into our Lenten journey and find Jesus is travelling with us.  
You are so loved~Michael



## MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Nancy Scott

Hello Wilson Family!

Thank you all for your participation at the annual meeting. All of the proposals on the ballot passed overwhelmingly. I'd like to congratulate the 2023 Executive Board members. We have our first meeting in a few days and I think I can promise them an exciting year.

As I write this, we are preparing for our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner (February 21st at 6:00pm) hosted by WoW with their team of helpers and our Lenten Soup Sunday Suppers.

As we go into this Holy season, it is a good time to reflect on how we can incorporate the teachings of Jesus into our lives, both individually and as a church family. Our recent mission study reinforced the importance Wilson places on providing help to those in need.

This year, I will be asking the Board how we, as a church, can expand on our current in-reach and outreach programs. I'll ask you the same question. Is there a particular group that you work with that would be a good fit for Wilson? Are there events going on in your neighborhood that Wilson could participate in? WoW is off to a great start with collecting and packaging menstruation kits for Church World Service (CWS).

We will also be exploring ways to keep you more informed about the work of the Board and various committees. Last year, the Board spent a lot of time planning and participating in various events throughout the year. This year, WoW will be taking on some of these responsibilities. Ultimately, our goal is to have an Events Committee.

At our first Board meeting, I will be asking everyone to think of new ways to utilize and advertise our space for outreach and rental income. I will propose that Homecoming becomes an annual event. We will attempt to have at least two fundraising events this year. We will focus on revitalizing our space, the remaining building renewal projects we discussed last year, and continuing to hold, or participate in, all of the many outreach events of 2022.

As always, I ask for your help, ideas, advice, and participation. Let's work together to make 2023 a banner year for Wilson!

Nancy



## FACILITIES

*Angela Della Ventura*

This is my first report as Facilities Chair. It is a daunting task to follow Tony Cito in that capacity but I vow to do my best to equal his effort.

Toward that end, we have decided to create a team intended to divide oversight of the facility into 4 areas, each headed by members who have expertise in those fields. I am pleased to list the names of those who have stepped up to fill those spaces.

- Keith Wighard will oversee the “Grounds”.
- Paul Ost will continue to keep an eye toward all the “Systems”.
- Pete Della Ventura will overview the “Structures”.
- Lisa Shpunder will monitor the “Interior Appearance” and “Maintain ‘How to ...’ Records”. My job will be to coordinate and distill the efforts of the team.

The following items have been accomplished recently:

- A yearly maintenance contract with Nardi Heating and Cooling has been finalized
- The choir loft has been redesigned to better accommodate our current music team and tech requirements and allow for a better flow of movement in the front area of the Sanctuary.
- A new landscaping contract is being negotiated.
- A roofing contractor has been engaged to explore and repair a leak which has appeared near the chimney of the fireplace in Fisher Hall.

Future projects to be explored include:

- Replacing rotting material around the large front windows of Fisher Hall
- Upgrading the condition of our many colored windows in the Sanctuary by replacing compromised wood where necessary and adding protective, insulating glass to the outside of each.

Both projects are necessary and significant in scope and expense.

Our building is aging, and as we care for it, we continue to appreciate the contributions of our congregation in keeping our light shining here on the hill.

There is an update on the following projects which have been completed:

Blackburn Hall & sinking bathroom above:

\$42,656.80

Office Wing roof: \$36,310.00

Water remediation-Manse: \$28,220.00

Total: \$107,186.80

Donations received: \$28,510.00, including \$6,000.00 from the Frippery

Memorial Endowment: \$26,000.00 (to cover the office wing roof)

Building Repair Fund: \$42,676.80

Total: \$107,186.80

Many thanks to all our individuals who donated toward these important projects and to the Frippery and the Memorial Endowment.

## FINANCIAL FACTS

*Pam Davis*

- Our year has started off on a positive note with some early annual Congregational Giving receipts and minimal expenses. Our interest and return on investments were healthy in January, as well.
- The Executive Board looks forward to continued fundraising opportunities that supplement our operating budget while providing fun, engaging fellowship time.

2023 is off to a great, *snowless* start as we enter our Lenten season.

- Please help celebrate Easter and support our hopes for the future by using the enclosed Easter giving envelope. Your generosity is appreciated.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### FEBRUARY 21

#### **Shrove Tuesday**

Join us at 6:00 p.m. in Fisher Hall for supper and community as we prepare for lent together.

### FEBRUARY 22

#### **Ash Wednesday**

•8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Drive thru imposition by Rev. Michael

•Sanctuary open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

for self imposition

•5:00 p.m. Service and imposition from Rev. Michael

### FEBRUARY 28-APRIL 4

#### **Open Sanctuary**

on Tuesdays during Lent for self directed prayer and contemplation

8 a.m.-12 p.m.

#### **OST MEMORIAL RINGERS**

**February 26**

and tentatively

Palm Sunday **April 2**

#### **BOY SCOUT SUNDAY**

**February 26**

### MARCH 5, 12, 19, 26

#### **Sunday Soup Suppers**

at 4:30 p.m.

### APRIL 2

#### **Palm Sunday**

10 a.m. Worship Service

### APRIL 6

#### **Maundy Thursday**

6 p.m. Service in Fisher Hall

### APRIL 7

#### **Good Friday**

6 p.m. Service

### APRIL 9

#### **Easter Sunday**

10 a.m. Worship Service

### MAY 13

St. Marys Stony Hill Church &

Wilson Memorial Church

will host a BLOOD DRIVE on

May 13th at the Fire Exempt Hall in Watchung.

In loving memory of Fran Ellis

## EASTER LILY ORDER FORM

Please put your order with payment in the offering plate or send it to the Church Office by March 31st.

Lilies can be taken home after the Easter Service.

You may choose it to be in memory of or in honor of a loved one. A listing all of those remembered will be included in the Easter Bulletin.

Orders must be received by March 31st

Donor Name\_\_\_\_\_

In Loving memory of\_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of\_\_\_\_\_

No. \_\_\_\_\_ X \$12.00 per plant

Enclosed is \$\_\_\_\_\_

[www.wilsonmemorialchurch.org/GIVE](http://www.wilsonmemorialchurch.org/GIVE)

Make checks payable to  
Wilson Memorial Church.



## EQUITY COMMITTEE

*Michelle Marigliano*

"Mighty God, open our minds, stir our hearts, and teach us how to 'act justly', 'love mercy', and 'walk humbly' with you today." (Micah 6:8)

We at Wilson Memorial Church are designing and managing our building and spaces so that they can be readily accessed and used by everyone, regardless of age, size, ability or disability.

Have you noticed the Wilson Memorial Church sanctuary redesign?

The pews in the choir space and rear of the sanctuary have been removed. Folks can now self-select from several locations within the sanctuary to experience Sunday worship. The piano has a new location, and the lectern on some days is no longer front and center. These modifications allow our congregation to stroll, roll, and move without obstacles, and offer access to a multi-sensory experience without barriers.

In January Wilson began offering a gluten free communion option. Whether you have a food allergy or choose to remove this common food allergy from your diet for other reasons, we at Wilson Memorial Church want you to be included in our communion ritual. We are delighted to share that within the next month we will transition to gluten free communion for everyone.

Systemic or structural inequality happens when there is inherent inequality in the structures or processes carried out by groups of people who make decisions.

What examples of systematic and structural equity have you noticed that the Wilson Community can implement?

For example, in addition to flexible seating or communion hospitality, are there opportunities for us to consider clear, well-placed signage that uses recognizable symbols or pictograms to engage people with reading or cognitive difficulties, as well as those whose first language is not English?

Having choices that align with personal needs and preferences allows each of us to feel seen and heard. When we feel seen and heard we move through our life experience better in tune with our essential purpose, and more confident with seeking out new experiences.

What do you think we need to do to ensure that we create spaces that allow folks to feel seen and heard?

Share your ideas with the Equity and Justice Committee by emailing us at [admin@wilsonmemorialchurch.org](mailto:admin@wilsonmemorialchurch.org) or share your thoughts with Lisa Shpunder, Cota Kania or Michelle L. Marigliano during coffee hour.

## MUSIC CORNER

*Timothy Walton*

We, the Music Collective, look forward to seeing you on Tuesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Come. Learn a new song, enjoy this time of fellowship. We will be preparing music for Sunday's Worship and the Easter season.

If you are interested, send a message to [twalton.wilson@gmail.com](mailto:twalton.wilson@gmail.com).

ALL ARE WELCOME. From my heart to yours...may His peace be with you till we meet again!

## USHERS-GREETERS

Welcoming our visitors and church family into our church is a vital part of who we are at Wilson Memorial Church.

If you are interested in this vital ministry, please see Paul Ost, Russ Harding or Pam Davis. Help us welcome EVERYONE to our church family!



## IN MEMORIAM

Lola Zimmerman

## WoW

Cota Possien-Kania

The year 2022 ended with WoW organizing a Warm Winter Wear collection which was distributed by Angela Della Ventura at the Plainfield Food Security Program in Plainfield twice per month. Each distribution resulted in all our donated items being gratefully received, with all items being rehomed!

WoW is once again helping organize our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on February 21 at 6 p.m. Volunteers are needed to set up, serve and clean up. See the sign up sheet on Sunday in Fisher Hall.

Lenten Soup Suppers organized by WoW will begin on Sunday, March 5 and continue through March 26. All at 4:30 p.m. in Fisher Hall. Wow will host on March 12; Harold Kreis on March 5. Other soup makers are needed! See sign up sheet in Fisher Hall.

Church World Services (CWS) will receive some Wilson love and a major service project with WoW making "Period Packs" filled with feminine hygiene products to be distributed by CWS. Interested in helping? Sign up in Fisher Hall.

### LOOKING AHEAD:

Next WoW meeting is Thursday, March 2 at 11:30 a.m. in Fisher Hall.

Probably no meeting in April due to Holy Week. Discuss possible group activity/trip.

Looking for a facilitator to continue the Saturday WoW group. Volunteers?

For additional information please contact Cota Possien-Kania. cotapkania@gmail.com  
908-295-7534

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



Dennis Bakos  
Kelly Friede  
Bruce Heyman  
Celina Carvalho

## THE BLUE BIN

Angela Della Ventura

A quick update on what's happening with the Blue Bin these days.

Happily, the families we have been caring for are doing much better.

As you can imagine however, the current inflated prices make it difficult to stretch a small income to cover food and other household expenses so we continue to support two families with food and other necessities. I deliver food every 2 weeks now instead of every week, and will continue to do so until prices begin to ease up.

Your non-perishable food donations have stocked a good pantry to draw from. The Frippery has just come through with diapers for the two babies, 6 months and 18 months. And, I'm particularly grateful for your monetary donations, which are so important to provide the fresh food: milk, eggs, fruit, veggies and meats.

When you're out shopping, please remember our current needs, which include: rice, corn flour (Maseca), canned or jarred fruit, bathroom tissue and household supplies such as laundry detergent, dishwashing liquid, paper products and general hygiene items.

Feel free to drop off any hard-skinned fruit or veggies if it's no too cold out. Both Harold and I check The Bin every day.

If you become aware of another family who may need our support, please don't hesitate to contact me or the church office.

Thank you for your generosity. Our families always bless you.

In faith,  
Angela Della Ventura



**When grocery shopping add an extra non-perishable item for STARFISH. You can drop it off in the church bin.**

# THE FRIPPERY THRIFT SHOP

*Lisa Renaud*

(The pale yellow building in the TOP parking lot)

**OPEN Tuesdays/Thursdays and the FIRST Sat each month 9:30-12:30.**

Hello everyone! As you are reading this we are in the midst of taking down and donating any WINTER clothing to Dress For Success, The Pregnancy Aid Center, Bridges, Local Food Pantries and the VA Hospital at Lyons and possibly Agape House in Somerville if they are back to accepting donations after covid.

Our "Spring and Summer line" will be on the racks by the third week in February for your shopping pleasure.

If you haven't stopped in for a awhile, make sure to come spend an hour with us! Our lovely items can compare to Home Goods, TJ MAXX and Marshalls without the high price tags! Plus the money that comes in goes right out to the church and community needs. It's an unconfirmed rumor that Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt have been known to shop incognito for The Oscars right here at the Frippery!!!

We LOVE incoming donations from your home but please limit them to one bag or box each week, we get inundated with items quickly. The items seem to come IN faster than the items leaving.

ALL YEAR we appreciate your leftover tissue paper after showers and parties, we wrap all the glass items that customers purchase in it.

The Frippery was proud to recently support The Wilson Memorial Building Fund with \$6,000 that was used to redirect water in Michael's backyard and help toward building a beautiful patio. We also proudly supported Shirley Kreis with \$200 for her Penn State Dance A Thon benefiting Childhood Cancer. We've also sent out a FAIR SHARE of delivered meals to church members and volunteers who have been ill recently.

The Frippery is celebrating it's 52nd year.

Any questions, feel free to call/text Lisa Renaud 908-625-5042

## **UNITED FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SOCIETY Christmas gift collection 2022-**

Thank you from Lisa Renaud AND United Family in Plainfield for ANOTHER outstanding year with gifts for 100 people on Christmas morning. I know I've been doing this since 1992, making it my 31st year and my mother, Mary Ann Ingram had collected for United Family and The Park Hotel in Plainfield for at least 10-15 years before that.

Five social workers met us at Wilson in early December to fill there cars with gifts to take back and distribute to parents or in some cases grandparents to wrap the gifts for Christmas morning. YOU were the STARS that made that possible! It's a big job but it sets the Christmas tone for me, Thank you! xo

## **MARY ANN'S MITTENS, 2022 Collection**

This was our 5th year collecting hats, gloves, mittens, socks, etc in memory of Mary Ann Ingram. We tallied 537 ITEMS and I was also given \$90 to buy more when they go on clearance soon :) - Some were distributed and others will be separated by the confirmation class to be given out in February. They get divided between local food pantries, Visions and Pathways which is a safehouse for teenagers in Bridgewater, Agape House which is a temporary homeless shelter in Somerville for singles and families, the "Blue Bin" families, and the Pregnancy Aid Center in Raritan. Many thanks from the bottom of my heart to all that contributed xo Lisa Renaud.

## Worship Opportunities

Sunday Mornings at 10:00 am

In Person Worship

On-line Worship

Live Stream also available on You Tube

Link Available at:

[www.wilsonmemorialchurch.org/videos](http://www.wilsonmemorialchurch.org/videos)

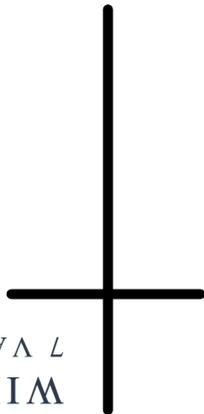
Services will be recorded and available for viewing as you are able.

## Office Hours

Monday-Friday

9:00 a.m to 12:30 p.m

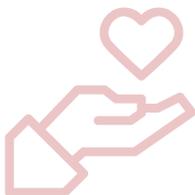
WILSON MEMORIAL UNION CHURCH  
7 VALLEY ROAD, WATCHUNG, NJ 07069



## HOW TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF WILSON MEMORIAL CHURCH

**In Service:** You are invited to place your offerings in the plate at the back of the Sanctuary.

**Text-to-Give:** Text WILSONCHURCH to (908) 460-8818 and follow the setup prompts for your first time. Once set up, you can simply text the gift amount to the above number.



**By Mail:** Gifts can be sent to the office at:  
7 Valley Road  
Watchung, NJ 07069



**Online:** Use our secure giving portal by scanning the QR code or by clicking the "Giving" link on our website: [www.wilsonmemorialchurch.org/GIVE](http://www.wilsonmemorialchurch.org/GIVE)