



# HILLTOPICS

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

WWW.WILSONMEMORIALCHURCH.ORG

*merry Christmas*

WILSON  
MEMORIAL CHURCH

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### A MESSAGE FROM REV. MICHAEL DROEGE

I don't know about you, but I love November. Most people think of November as just the month BEFORE the "Big Dog" of December. After all, December is the month that is all about parties and gifts and celebration. November is that month where we watch the earth retreat inside of itself. Leaves turn and fall to the ground, the darkness lingers longer, and animals go quiet in the burrows with all they have collected to survive what experts say will be a harsh winter. I love the quiet of November and I love the reflection of it.

The month begins reflecting on our loved ones with remembrance celebrations. We take a moment to give gratitude for veterans and all they show us about courage and sacrifice, we allow a moment of honest confession as we honor indigenous people as it is Native American History Month, and we even reflect on our own participation in the life of the local church through it being Stewardship Month. Of course, the big one is our national day of gratitude on Thanksgiving Day.

The reflection of November allows for the preparations required in December – our season of Advent. Christians often get Advent and Christmas mixed up. Advent is how we prepare for Christmas. We "hang the greens" the Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent (Dec 3), welcome new members and confirmands, join with our family and friends as we light our corner trees, and seek again the face of God as we practice waiting for the promise to come again anew.

Each year, God comes to us in a brand-new way. We tell an old story, but it always comes with new life. We grow a little more, experience wonder a little more, and hopefully bring that peace on earth a little more.

We love Christmas, but we should never be in a hurry for it to come. We will get to Christmas. We will sing carols and tell the nativity story. Christmas always comes, and it always comes best when we patiently wait. That is the message of advent. There is much to experience on our way to the promise. You are all wanted on the journey. You are deeply loved – Michael

### DECEMBER 2

**3pm** Intergenerational Advent Workshop

**4pm** Advent Kick-off and Dinner

**5:00pm** Tree Lighting

### DECEMBER 3

New Member Sunday  
Confirmation

Return United Family Gifts

### DECEMBER 3 & 10

Boy Scout Troop 32 Holiday  
Greens at 10am Worship

### DECEMBER 10

Cookie exchange

### DECEMBER 17

Potluck Brunch

### DECEMBER 21

**6pm** Blue Christmas Service

### DECEMBER 24

**10am** Christmas Eve Family Service

**11pm** Candlelight Service

### JANUARY 28

Annual Meeting

### FEBRUARY 14

Ash Wednesday Service

## MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Nancy Scott

In the past, I've used this space to recap the accomplishments of the past few months and invite you to upcoming events. As I write this, the week before Thanksgiving, I would instead like to take the opportunity to thank those who make my job easy and make Wilson continue to be the light on the hill. A heartfelt thank you to:

- My fellow Board members for their dedication, support, encouragement, hard work and patience with my many lists and ideas.
- Pastor Michael for his patience with me at our weekly meetings when I sometimes go way off topic.
- To the Choir Collective who encouraged me to be part of the talent show.
- To the Facilities Team, Various Committees, WOW, The Frippettes, Gala and VBS Volunteers and many more – I had no idea how many moving parts there are in the Church. Please know your work is appreciated and recognized.
- To the Staff- because of you the running of the church is seamless.
- To my Wilson Family- your warmth and love boosts me every Sunday and stays with me throughout the week.

May you all have a Blessed Christmas – Nancy

### CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

President: Nancy Scott  
Vice President: Judy Wall  
Treasurer: Pam Davis  
Clerk: Yvette Nora Whitley

Laurie Conley  
Angela Della Ventura  
Bruce Heyman  
Kendal MacTaggart  
Cota Possien-Kania  
Sally Reagan  
Lisa Shpunder



## FINANCIAL FACTS

Pam Davis

### Time, Talent, and Treasure - Stewardship

Stewardship tends to focus on the importance of participation and contribution of our Time & Talents to enhance our church community. While I believe that is vital to the growth and substance of our church, as treasurer, I am tasked with addressing the elephant in the room-Treasure.

Historically, Wilson Memorial Church has offered a gentle nudge toward giving, probably because we value our relationships with each other, our friendly, welcoming environment as the key to our success. We are the beneficiary of endowed gifts from members who have passed on, which has also allowed us to soft-peddle our giving obligations.

**The reality is, we are a business...a church business.**

We have bills and expenses: salaries, utilities, supplies, facility upkeep and more. These are typical expenses associated with the operation of any business, but unlike other businesses, we don't sell a service that provides income. Our income is derived from a few sources, half of which relies on our Congregational Giving-what each of us feels moved to and can afford to contribute to the life of our church.

As your treasurer, I am charged with the responsibility of maintaining the budget you approved. At this time of year I start to fret. Traditionally, approximately 30% of the year's total Congregational Giving occurs during November and December. This year, at the end of October, we were 40% short of our budgeted amount for Congregational Giving. If history repeats, we will struggle to meet our goal.

**So, I leave you with two questions:**

1. Are you able to give something extra this year to help close the 2023 gap?
2. During this Stewardship Campaign, are you able to increase your giving in 2024?

## FACILITIES

Angela Della Ventura

The Facilities Team has been busy preparing for winter while keeping an eye toward Spring.

The following is a list of work completed.

- Front doors, chapel doors, all fascia and molding on the Chapel and Fisher Hall as well as all iron railings have been painted. The wood sign on the Valley Road side will be addressed in Spring.
- Hand-railing up to pulpit project is planned and progressing. Special wood has been ordered.
- Members of the Facilities Team are preparing a list of short and long-term goals in their specific areas with budget planning in mind.
- Landscaping and snow removal contracts are now in place for next year.
- Fire protection equipment has been updated and monitoring contract renewed.
- Kitchen facilities have received the seal of approval from the health inspector.

Upcoming:

- Estimates are being sought on repair of deteriorated wood moldings and protective exterior glass panels for sanctuary windows.
- The exterior of the sanctuary to be painted following window work.
- Discussion renewed on options for decorative/stained glass.

Team Members: Angela Della Ventura, Keith Wighard, Lisa Shpunder, Paul Ost, Pete Della Ventura

## WOW

Cota Possien-Kania



### Winter Coat Drive!!!

The Women of Wilson will be collecting sweaters, sweatshirts, jackets, coats, hats and gloves over the winter months. New socks are always welcomed too!

### Upcoming meeting dates:

Dec. 7th at 11:30am and Feb. 1st at 11:30am.

The February meeting will be about coordinating Ash Wednesday and Soup Suppers.

ALL are welcomed to attend.



## BAPTISM CELEBRATION

Lucas Mac Osuch

## RECAP ENCHANTED FOREST

Kendal MacTaggart

The Enchanted Forest: Movie Set was a spooktacular success! Walking along the magical trail we found sets from Barbie, Ghostbusters, Charlie and The Great Pumpkin, Toy Story, Inside Out, The Karate Kid, Kim Possible, Alice in Wonderland, Sleeping Beauty and Monsters Inc.

Right at the entrance, the charismatic Ken awaited, showcasing his Barbie car for delightful photo opportunities. And of course complimentary popcorn was generously provided for all to enjoy as they explored the intricately crafted movie sets.

Families eagerly strolled through Charlie's Pumpkin Patch and tried their luck at the claw machine at the Toy Story set. Joy from Inside Out engaged the children in activities. For those seeking a bit of action, the skillful Dan, imparted his knowledge with entertaining moves while Kim Possible brought an air of mystery and excitement to the event.

Families wandered through wonderland to meet Alice and the Mad Hatter to travel down the rabbit hole. Princess Aurora graciously distributed treats to excited attendees, while the Ghostbusters team orchestrated a variety of games, ensuring that families could relish quality time together. Enchanted Forest guests and participants were offered hotdogs and hamburgers before departing.

It was a day where enchantment and excitement intertwined seamlessly, creating a truly magical experience for families and participants alike making Enchanted Forest a successful day!

## SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

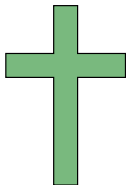
**Sexton Assistant:** We would love to have a team to call on to be assigned to an event or just custodial needs throughout the week.

**Trail Team:** Maintaining the Kindness Trail throughout the year.

**(de) Clutter Coordinator:** A crew to check on our over flow of 'stuff' throughout the year.

Interested in assisting? Reach out to Michael [mdroege@wilsonmemorialchurch.org](mailto:mdroege@wilsonmemorialchurch.org)





## MEMORIAM

Robert W. Nunn  
Ed Kresge  
Nancy Rossnagel



## THE FRIPPERY THRIFT SHOP

Lisa Renaud

(The pale yellow building in the TOP parking lot)

**Serving the community since 1971.**

We are open Tuesday, Thursday and the first Saturday each month 9:30 AM to 12:30. Cash and Venmo sales. Checks accepted from church members.

Why go to HomeGoods and TJ Maxx? The Frippery, has so many similar items at pennies on the dollar.

We are currently overflowing with home decor, china, puzzles, books, games, linens, kitchen items, Christmas items and winter clothing for the family.

Make sure to stop in often to get the best deals!

We are asking for a limit of two bags or boxes of donations at a time due to space issues. Happy holidays to all from all of your FRIPPERY volunteers.

**United Family and Children's Society Christmas gift drive 2023.** The annual gift drive began this year on November 19. It has been a wonderful way to get in the Christmas spirit! **We ask that all bags be returned to church by Sunday, December 3** during church service.

Lisa Renaud and her Christmas helpers will then double check each bag, add donated items where needed and have bags ready for a social worker pick up on December 7. Please leave gifts unwrapped. We can always use gift cards in the denominations of \$10 from Dunkin' Donuts, CVS, ShopRite, Walmart and Target. This helps us put together Christmas bags for individuals whose bags may not have been chosen.

### **Mary Ann's Mitten Tree, In memory of Mary Ann Ingram**

The mitten tree will be located outside of the Fisher Hall doors. We will have the tree up for the month of December. Consider adding hats, scarves, gloves, mittens, new socks, new packaged underwear. All collected items will be divided between local organizations in need.

Questions? Please feel free to text or call Lisa Renaud 908-625-5042

\* Yarn is also available for any crocheters or knitters out there!



## BLOOD DRIVE

Judy Wall

The Wilson Memorial Church and St Marys Covenant Committee hosted their fall blood drive. We collected **39** units of blood, affecting over **117** people. Thank you to all involved.

Save the date for their Spring drive on **April 20th** at the Watchung Exempt Hall.

## CONFIRMATION

Matthew May

Our confirmands, Sam Hunsinger, Lia Wighard, and Emily Hauck have been working diligently on completing their projects.

We have encouraged the confirmands to choose an area of church ministry that is interesting to them and partner with the church community to achieve actionable goals for church growth. From sprucing up our kindness trail to providing service in our outreach ministries, these incredible individuals have demonstrated love and care to our community and our ministries.

I remain amazed and impressed with their growth and development as they learn what their faith journey looks like. Each of them has met with the executive board to explain their projects, share their insights from confirmation sessions and observations, and dream with us about the future of the church.

They have shown great determination and each of them are well on their way to doing incredible things. I have witnessed how they have embraced the challenges of leadership and succeeded with their goals. I hope you will share in my joy as we welcome them into membership on December 3!

## FAITH FORMATION

Michelle Marigliano

Did you know you can carry Wilson's Sunday service into your week? Each week through our newsletter, Wilson shares a Faith Formation supplement to nourish your spiritual journey. This weekly supplement is filled with guiding questions, poetry, music, children's books, and storytelling for all ages!

# EQUITY COMMITTEE

Michelle Marigliano



According to the Harvard Business review, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) are good for business. A business that configures opportunity, interaction, decision making, communication and belonging for a wide range of lived experiences attracts diverse clients, and ensures individuals get what they need while feeling a sense of belonging.

Having a committee that examines DEIA is a symbol of the organization's commitment to create a community of loving care. Wilson is proud to celebrate the 3rd birthday of our Equity and Justice Committee! The work of this committee sends a clear message that Wilson is serious about understanding and taking action for people's needs. Our collective response as a congregation supports our dedication to service folks well.

Over the past several months the following actions have been implemented to expand access, comfort, belonging, and compassion at Wilson.

- Raised awareness of Mission centered actions during Wilson's Homecoming Gala.
- Access Sunday, included critical learning around the language and attitudes we perpetuate. One theme included the difference between cure and healing. Pastor Michael Droege asked folks to reexamine the core nature that influences the culture of Wilson church. This call to action included our community's commitment to investigate perspectives that are different from our own, and work to affirm and celebrate the lived experiences of our siblings.
- We welcomed and celebrated the artistry of blind singer, Anneesha Spruell, known as muffin.
- We began two new traditions during our Sunday service. A standing picture symbol now indicates the times during service when folks stand and the Call to Worship and Opening Prayer includes a call and response. These actions work to better align our practices with emerging readers and those whose primary communication and engagement does not include reading print.
- Visitors to the Enchanted Forest experienced more access to healthy treat options such as clementines, low sugar beverages, chips, crackers, and toys. According to The Teal Pumpkin Project providing non-food trinkets and treats area a simple way to make trick-or-treating safer and more inclusive for the one in 13 children living with food allergies, and many others impacted by intolerances and other conditions.
- Our Equity and Justice work does not require compromising or changing who one is or what one may stand for; it simply creates room for different individuals to thrive and be included as unique people with important contributions toward building the kin-dom of God. Our dedication to cultural competence and multiple perspectives allows us to understand each other without bias or judgment.
- Our journey of advancing our heightened awareness of the issues and structural factors that exclude helps us to develop as a more inclusive community. Wilson's ongoing process of growing our inclusive practices needs you.

This year the Equity and Justice Committee will prioritize actions to engage focus groups. Each focus group will include a maximum of 6 people who will meet to explore and discuss a topic that aligns with their shared identity. A priority for identity groups who make up Black, Brown, Indigenous communities, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning communities, seniors, immigrants, refugees, disabled, or young people populations. The groups will share feedback, opinions, knowledge and insight to inform how Wilson will advance the needs of a particular community.

**Upcoming focus group scheduled for November 28th at 6pm.** If you or someone you know feels drawn to lead Wilson into the future, contact Tina Kelly at [admin@wilsonmemorialchurch.org](mailto:admin@wilsonmemorialchurch.org) or 908.755.5020 to determine the best opportunity to share.

## WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

### Sunday Mornings at 10:00am

In Person Worship

On-line Worship

**Live Stream also available on our  
website**

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

## OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Email: [admin@wilsonmemorialchurch.org](mailto:admin@wilsonmemorialchurch.org)

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 clicking the "Giving" link on our website; [www.wilsonmemorialchurch.org/GIVE](http://www.wilsonmemorialchurch.org/GIVE)