

2021 Woodfords Congregational Church Scholarship Winners

We congratulate all those who received education scholarships from Woodfords Church for the 2021-22 academic year. The recipients this year range from young college students to adults returning to school for career development or to pursue a new career direction. We are pleased to contribute to their efforts and we wish them a fruitful academic experience!



Deidre Drake

Studying for: a Master of Nursing degree in Education at Walden University
WCC Connections: daughter of Tom and Pip Hennessey, grew up at WCC in Sunday School, Youth Group and Confirmation

In her own words “I never felt God’s love and wonder as I did after I heard my baby cry for the first time and held her for the first time...I have learned that people presenting to the Emergency Department are scared and often not used to asking for help. We treat everyone equally and with respect. That is justice to me.”



Molly Johnson

Studying: starting at University of Vermont, studying neuroscience and psychology “In my freshman year, I hope to confirm that neuroscience/psychology is what I want to focus on.”

WCC Connections: Youth Choir, Youth Group Christmas pageants and plays, helped with Family Promise, Bell Choir and Confirmation

In her own words: “Through having conversations about the Black Lives Matter movement with WCC and my classmates, making art to display BLM’s mission, protesting, helping defund my school’s police program and having dialogues with family and friends, I’ve learned about how important it is to use my voice to make change....I’ve done a volunteer internship with Planned Parenthood this year, testified in the state legislature to get free menstrual products in schools and raised awareness on a lack of African-American history in Maine’s public schools.”



Hannah Smith-Erb

Studying: starting a Master of Divinity degree at Boston University School of Theology this coming fall to “deepen my leadership skills in justice-oriented churches”

WCC connections: Confirmation, helped with Sunday School, facilitated activities for Woodfords Pilgrim Lodge weekends; was a camper and on staff at Pilgrim Lodge and was the Ecumenical Youth Group Coordinator for WCC and 4 other Portland churches
In her own words: “My organizing with the Maine Poor People’s Campaign has been a big way that I have worked for racial justice over the past year. In this organizing I have learned how racism allows poverty to continue, as racism teaches people that their neighbors are the enemy, rather than a social system that doesn’t care about their wellbeing.”



Billie Jo Snyder

Studying: Social work at the University of Alabama, Birmingham; “I am not sure where I will end up after school. I just know I want to help people.”

Connections to WCC: daughter of Brent and Susan Wooten, Youth group and Pilgrim Lodge

In her own words: “Through a social work course on Isms, I have gained a much better understanding of some of the pitfalls minorities face every day. Recognizing these

pitfalls is the beginning of changing these things. As a social worker, I strive to be culturally competent.”



Carol Swicker

Studying: in her last year at USM Grad School to become an Adult Gerontological Acute Care Nurse Practitioner working in an acute care hospital Emergency Department

Connections to WCC: “Woodfords continues to ground me in my faith. When I walk through the door, I am home. Memories of Sunday School, choir practice, giggling with my sisters in the pews, hosting State Youth Council retreats, playing games with Youth Group in Memorial Hall. It’s all there”

In her own words: “My nursing practice and my graduate work is allowing me to identify ways that I can bring my commitment to social justice and my respect for the dignity of all people to my nursing practice. I took on a leadership role in the emergency department in considering best practices for serving our homeless population.”



Sarah Thomson

Studying: at SpaTech to become a massage therapist

“I like the idea of a second career that offers a direct, literally hands-on way to connect and communicate with others.”

WCC Connections: Christian Ed Committee, Family Promise and teaching Sunday School

In her own words: “I have tried, always imperfectly, to remember that I’m called to serve and to care for others—whether that’s in writing books that touch on moral issues as well as entertain, staying engaged in the political realm in ways that help create a world that moves slowly closer to justice, or simply remembering that those

around me deserve compassion and care—something that I can offer as a massage therapist.”



Alec Troxell

Studying: at University of Maine, majoring in economics with a minor in marketing “I still do not know where I see myself after college. I feel like this is a year when I figure this out.”

WCC Connections: Pilgrim Lodge as a camper and on the church weekends, caroling at Park Danforth, helping with Family Promise families

In his own words: Alec wrote a poignant story about ‘the worst race of my life.’ “The next day the sun continued to shine and in a small moment of realization, I found that I wasn’t alone and this has become my most meaningful experience on my journey....I know now I can rely on Christ and my friends and family for everything.”



Anna Troxell

Studying: at Simmons College to be a labor and delivery nurse or a Midwife. “My goal for the upcoming school year is to find a healthy balance of school and exploring who I am as a person now that I’ll be on my own.”

WCC connections: confirmation, youth group, assisted with Family Promise activities and attended Pilgrim Lodge as a camper and with WCC

In her own words “Having been a dancer for the past sixteen years of my life and teaching dance for the past four years, I’ve learned that I love working with others and working with the human body.”

“As I young white woman, I will have opportunities and experiences that my black counterpart would have to work three times as hard to have. This is without calculating in family support, mental trauma and family income. I do not take this for granted and I continue to learn more each day about my privilege, and it will forever change my outlook on life and the disparity in the world.”



Isabel Walter

Studying: in her third year of post grad study at Massachusetts College of Art and Design planning to complete the Graphic Design Certificate program and move toward a career in design

WCC Connections: Sunday School, Confirmation, Youth group (“friends and mentors remain some of my biggest supporters and best friends”); lots of volunteer work at Pilgrim Lodge camps and Woodfords retreats

In her own words: “I have been a part of several large marches for Black Lives in Boston which were powerful and energizing, but also an important time to reflect on those who did not receive the justice they deserve: George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. A big way I have been able to work toward justice is to support black owned businesses as often as I can.”



Brent Wooten

Studying: at the University of Maine, Augusta to become a licensed commercial drone operator

Connections to WCC: lay minister, Sunday School teacher, Safety Team, Council member, Fair cook, S. C. at Fair, and Long Creek Gifts coordinator

In his own words: “I’ve done many things, but probably the most meaningful was learning how God works differently in our lives at different times. My journey is far from over....I believe a lot of our personal, local, national and global issues would be more easily solved if people really loved each other the way God demonstrates love.”