

A MESSAGE FROM OUR COLLEGE PASTOR



Dear Friends,

As you get this letter, a new year of ministry at Wesley is already in full swing! January 1st-7th, twenty-five students, three staff, and two volunteers joined sixty other students from United Methodist ministries across Arkansas to begin 2017 by serving in Christ's name in Baton Rouge, LA. Together, we helped more than a dozen families rebuild their homes and lives after last August's flooding by hanging drywall and installing flooring and roofing. Each night, we shared Cajun food, worship, and a lot of love and laughter. New relationships were formed and old ones were strengthened. It is amazing what can be accomplished for the Kingdom in just a week by a small army of young adults who love the Lord and want to make a difference!

The week we spent together serving was just one more sign among many over the past year of the growing vitality of our Wesley ministry. With the move into the new Wesley House in March and our restored proximity to the daily path of students, we witnessed a tangible excitement and spirit of anticipation growing among our students, volunteers, and donors about what God was doing in our midst and the plans He had for the future of our ministry. And, God did not disappoint!

I was so proud watching our students this fall welcome hundreds of new students to the U of A during Welcome Weeks, engaging them in relationship and encouraging them to find a place in the body of Christ. I smiled as our Weekly Wesley event on Tuesday nights grew to the mid-forties, with more than ninety students participating over the course of the fall semester. And, I celebrated as new steps bore fruit – a Freshmen Community ministry was launched, a new Midweek Prayer and Communion Service flourished and students heartily adopted new opportunities to give of themselves, including serving breakfast to needy neighbors through Genesis Church in South Fayetteville.

MLK weekend, our new leadership team retreated to seek to discern together God's leading for our ministry this spring. We have yet again been blessed with committed and creative student leadership. Among those on the team is a sophomore who only started regularly attending Wesley this fall. Recently, she shared with me how as a freshman living in Futrell Hall the previous year, she watched the Wesley House being built across the street. Her curiosity and growing desire for Christian community, along with the encouragement of her mother who had also attended Wesley in college, prompted her to give it a try. How grateful we are for that prompting that led her through our doors! Hers is one of many stories of the Holy Spirit guiding students, by all kinds of paths, into relationship with us and, through us, into a deeper connection with Christ, His people and His Kingdom.

You, my friends, have made all of this possible. You, responding to God's calling, have opened this new chapter for our ministry. So, with all my heart, thank you. Thank you for what you have done and what you will yet do. This is such important work, and there are so many lives yet to touch and transform by Christ's grace. I feel so blessed that you will be alongside as we give it all we have to give. Thank you for believing in God's great goodness at work through us.

Please keep those prayers coming for a faithful and fruitful 2017!

Grace and peace,
Emily Burch
College Pastor and Director