

Wesley Foundation at Penn State

be fed. be known. be loved. welcome home!



Jan 2022

“There is a light that shines in the darkness that is only visible there.”

Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*

There is something about this time of year, as we continue to live in days with more darkness and less light, which makes me contemplate the gifts of the darkness and wintering. What might these long and dark nights share with us, as people of faith? What might we be able to see in this place that we do not notice elsewhere?



This past Christmas, as the twinkle lights went up on the trees and buildings of downtown State College, it made me stop in my steps. How brightly they shone against the

dark sky! How beautiful they were! And, the juxtaposition of the small light and the vast dark sky continues to remind me “even the darkness is not dark

to you, the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.” (Psalm 139:12)

In the midst of this past semester, even while we felt the uncertainty of the future of which we are only more and more aware, we give thanks for the gifts! Throughout the semester, Abba Java was able to remain open and we saw more and more students return to our spaces. We also continued to meet weekly for our Wesley community dinners; these gatherings were a ritual and practice of breaking bread together, a beautiful spark of connection and community. One of my favorite prayer practices we used involved newspapers and permanent markers; as we blacked out words in order to create a prayer or poem (an interesting practice for you to try out!).

As we move into this new semester and continue to hold our expectations with loose hands, we will continue to practice walking in the dark, seeing the beauty around us, and giving thanks to God, the One who walks with us.

Thank YOU for walking with us,



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What is the Wesley Foundation?

The Wesley Foundation is a Campus Ministry sponsored by the

United Methodist Church, but you don't have to be United Methodist to participate. No matter where you are on your faith journey you are welcome to join us for worship and to explore, wrestle, pray, serve, play, study, and live in community with us. We are a ministry grounded in love, grace, and in the teachings of Jesus. All are welcome here.

What is Abba Java Coffeehouse?

Abba Java Coffeehouse is a ministry of Wesley at Penn State, the campus ministry of St. Paul's United Methodist Church & Wesley Foundation. The mission of Abba Java is to be a "home away from

ABBA JAVA

a student story: Joelma



In the Fall of 2021, Abba Java was able to open with a little more normalcy and get back to providing a “home away from home” for Penn State students. It has been so nice to see more faces, both familiar and unfamiliar, and get to know more students!

We averaged **200-250 students per day** this fall, compared to the 40-50 per day we saw in the fall of 2020. Thanks to our many congregational volunteers, we were able to increase the number of hours we are open from 12 hours (over 3 days) per week in the fall of 2020 to **38 hours (over 5 days) per week in fall 2021**. We also welcomed back student volunteers, which has been great! It has been so nice to have Abba Java back to a bustling hub of activity!

Also, this fall we renewed our partnership with Weis Market and Starbucks at Pattee Library, and began a new partnership with Gemelli Bakers for food reclamation. Through these partnerships, **we collected almost 350 pounds of food**, which would have otherwise been thrown away. We are so thankful to these partners for helping us feed our students. We’ve also been able to continue our partnership with Wegmans, thanks to Patsy Nelson and her team that pick up weekly for us!

We are so thankful for all of our volunteers and those that support us in other ways! Thank you!

Karen Morgan
Coffeehouse Manager

I’m writing to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for all the love and kindness the Abba Java staff, members of St. Paul’s, and volunteers at the Wesley Foundation constantly pour out to students and to people who visit the church.

I think that you have no idea the magnitude of the difference you make. Abba Java is a home for me. Whenever my colleagues and I need to feel at home, as international students, we go to Abba Java and there is always someone caring and sharing a smile, feeding my body and soul. It’s very challenging to be away from home, family, and the community you are familiar with, but since I came in contact with the church and Abba Java, I found a place I could call home! Thank you so much.

I would like to add that in Abba Java I see unconditional love, compassion - that is why I’m always excited to be there. It’s an environment that erases any frustration a person might be going through, there is a word of comfort. The people around show that they care, asking how you are, and they are always willing to listen to your stories. They show you that your issues matter and encourage you to hold on and stay strong. You can count on them to assist you and it is like you are never inconveniencing them, something I haven’t found anywhere else. I treasure it and I want to develop it and share with people around me and hope to continue when I get back home in my country Angola.



I think this is what the world needs; empathy and compassion: these are the principles that make great people, communities, and nations. Thank you to all who make this possible; you are making a huge impact on many of us. Please do not become weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9).



Abba Java: Up Late

In an attempt to minister in our community with our presence, we have started a new experiment, Abba Java: UP LATE. Once a month, beginning in the fall, we set up a table outside our church building from 10pm-2am and gave out free water, popcorn, snacks, and warm beverages. These hours are not typically a time where we, as the church, are present AND YET it is a time when MANY others walk past our building.

We heard the question again and again and again — “why are you doing this?” And we responded, saying “we are just trying to be good and loving neighbors.” This simple expression of love and care, in a warm bag of popcorn and cool glass of water, has surprised our neighbors and brought opportunity for conversation, connection, and joy.

“What struck me immediately is that students can’t fathom that anyone would offer them so much as a glass of water just to be kind, without expecting anything in return. I’m grateful for the chance to counter that cynicism by modeling the most basic Christian principle to simply “love your neighbor.”

- Mindy Boffmeyer, Volunteer

“As I have participated in Abba Java Up Late, I have been blessed to be able to be the hands and feet of Christ to neighbors who may have previously only seen us as an empty stone building. Now, because of a simple cup of water and a warm smile, they are seeing that the church is a loving neighbor...”

- Pastor Greg Milinovich

We are planning to continue throughout the Spring semester, if you are interested in joining the fun, contact Sarah.



FALL RETREAT: WESLEY FOREST



The soft crunch of wet leaves under my feet. The smell of decaying wood. The silence of mindful prayer, and the laughter of friendships. Over the course of one day away from State College, I was able to take a breath and reconnect with these sensations on the Wesley Foundation's fall retreat.

Along with students from Bloomsburg University, we spent a day at Wesley Forest, one of Susquehanna Conference's camp and retreat centers. In a space far removed from Penn State's bustling campus, this was an opportunity to center ourselves inwards by focusing our senses on His creation.



By spending time in nature, sharing conversations with fellow students and ministry leaders, and creating a piece of art, I felt peace. There were countless moments where I felt this calm throughout the day. I felt it during our time of outdoor worship in the forest and during an impromptu game of cornhole. I felt it after three hours of twisting wires, when I realized that the wires had turned into a sculpture of a tree. While life can often feel like a constant pull between responsibilities, it is important to find time for spiritual rejuvenation and focus.



Wesley Leadership Team

Happy 2022 from the Wesley Leadership Team!

Our membership includes church staff, volunteers from the congregation, present Penn State students and alumni, all who are interested in the well being of our Penn State students. We welcome each student to the Wesley Foundation through the Abba Java coffeehouse, a place where all who enter are: Known, Fed, and Loved.

Our team is dedicated to building and strengthening the relationships between students and our community by providing a loving and safe place for all to meet friends and make new acquaintances. A few projects we have been working on over the years have provided avenues toward engagement for those students who are interested in becoming more involved. While our team has focused on upgrading and remodeling the Wesley building to make it more welcoming to all, it's the people we meet and interact with who are most important. With that in mind, we strive to encourage intergenerational relationships that provide growth and lasting connections for all.

As we go forward this year, the Wesley Leadership Team will be working on long-range plans for the Wesley Foundation and developing ways to meet our goals to provide a safe and welcoming "home away from home" for all Penn State students.

Wesley Leadership Team 2022

Lauren Bonsall

Julia Briselli, Undergraduate student

Lily Campbell, Graduate Student

Jean Chirpas

Andrew Chung, Undergraduate student

Rebecca Connelly

Rev. Dr. Pam Ford

Karen Eklund, Chair

Dr. Lou Geschwindner

Rev. Brenda Leigey, District Superintendent

Michael Lewis, Penn State Alum & Former

Wesley Intern

Rev. Greg Milinovich, Senior Pastor

Karen Morgan, Abba Java Coffeehouse

Manager

Julie Simon

Dr. Darrin Thornton, Faculty Representative

Rev. Sarah Voigt, Wesley Director



Wesley Community Dinner, a weekly ritual on Wednesday nights where students gather for a meal, conversation, and practices of faith



Nikole Hannah-Jones, speaking to students virtually; the talk was co-sponsored by Wesley Foundation along with Lutheran Student Community, Presbyterian Student Fellowship, Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, and the Bellisario College of Communications

THANK YOU!

We are thankful for the support of the Susquehanna United Methodist Conference, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, local congregations, and YOU! Thank you for partnering with us as we seek to feed, know, and love students of the Penn State community.

If you would like more information on how to further support and connect with the Wesley Foundation at Penn State, contact Pastor Sarah at svoigt.wesley@gmail.com. We would love to have you as a partner in this work!

To contact or donate via mail:

Wesley Foundation

250 E. College Ave.

State College, PA 16801

To make an online donation:

www.wesleypsu.org

To contact Rev. Sarah Voigt:

email: svoigt.wesley@gmail.com

phone: 814-238-6739 x.139
