

Cumberland Wesley Fellowship
Whitney R. Simpson

Our Mission Statement:

Cumberland Wesley Fellowship is a fun, caring & inclusive community of faith where YOU are welcome! We can't wait to #CUatWesley.

In August 2023, the Wesley Fellowship ministry at Cumberland University was re-launched in partnership with our host church, Lebanon First United Methodist Church.

Wesley now has an updated cozy space for the students to "hang out" as a group on Wednesday after class and before dinner at LFUMC. In that space, we include time for small group chat time, snacks, games, coloring, de-stressing, prayer, and conversation. The church provides dinner, which works out well for those who attend. We offer transportation for the students and invite them to this free meal weekly. This core group of students has quickly emerged as our student leaders, including Wesley's President, Outreach Coordinator, and Hospitality and Connection Host.

Our campus minister also facilitates an hour-long experiential session after dinner for students longing to go deeper on their faith journey, called Spirituality 101. Topics have included a Spiritual Gifts Assessment, Ways to Pray, Understanding The Labyrinth, How to Read Scripture, Prayer Beads for Lent, and more. Our student leaders planned and chose the topics for our going deeper sessions.

Additionally, CU Wesley hosts on-campus fellowship events where we gather with our students and invite new students to join in various events - field day, camp night with Cedar Crest, prayer bead making, and more. We sponsor outings and field trips for team building and community connection (like bowling, hiking, or drink night at Sonic). In addition, we have offered ongoing opportunities for students to obtain community service hours (required of many of the TN Promise Students at CU) by volunteering for the church food giveaways, pumpkin patch, and more.

Over the winter, Wesley sponsored a food drive among local UMCs (with overwhelming support from LFUMC, Grace UMC, and Cooks UMC) to provide students remaining on campus over the winter break with shelf-stable food for the holiday. Additionally, thanks to LFUMC, we provide hot meals for these students.

The response to the food drive was so positive that we have a new endeavor of stocking a basket in a common area of campus with shelf-stable food items that students can take as they need them. We hope to grow this next year with more church donations and student involvement.

Other activities this semester have included Happy Bags sponsored by LFUMC's UWF (goody bags delivered by our campus minister to students while visiting or lunching on campus), partnerships with other student organizations, including a pizza party with The Art of Life and Student Life at CU, an active social media account to connect with current students, t-shirts designed by students and gifted on campus, participation in Chapel Chats and other University events as well as regular check-ins with Student Life as well as Dr. Mike Ripski, University Chaplain.

Our new Student Outreach Coordinator has spearheaded a donation drive for summer care items to be given to our unhoused friends at Compassionate Hands (a local non-profit). Donations have been received from local congregations and students on campus at Cumberland University.

Not only are we proud of the diverse group of students who are part of Wesley at CU, but it's also remarkable to see the congregational support we have received this past year. The response to supporting our students has been phenomenal, and we thank God for the renewal of this fruitful ministry, serving young adults on their faith journey.

We are looking ahead with our new Advisory Board members, student leaders, and partner churches to offer more connections and fundraising opportunities. If you are passionate about spiritual care for Cumberland University students, contact our campus minister to learn more or get involved at whitney.simpson@twkumc.org.