

## **The Wesley Foundation of the University of Tennessee Martin (UTM)**

### **Megan Lewter, Interim Director**

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens,” Ecclesiastes 3:1. We certainly have experienced these well known words this year. With the resignation of the director in August, we mourned the loss of the known and comfortable and took some time to heal.

The fall semester was filled with familiar activities. Our annual silent auction, with donations from our local community, raised over \$2,000. And for the third year, Wesley had a joint activity with UTM SPECTRUM, a campus organization specifically for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Other fall activities were: Lief Eriksen night, Halloween party, participating in UTM’s Trunk or Treat event, and a Christmas party with a fun game of “Dirty Santa.” We also learned about ourselves and each other by studying the Enneagram in small groups with the hopes of working better together. Thursday night dinner and worship continued with meals provided by friends and families with local pastors serving as ministers. Our semester ended with a graduation party.

In January, the council gathered for a spring retreat. Our focus was deciding what needed to be torn down, thrown away or uprooted and what needed to be built, kept, and planted. The title of the day was “Wesley as a mission, Wesley on a mission.” We started the day with leadership development, then created goals and plans for the spring.

Two of our goals were (1) to get out of our comfort zone and (2) to increase Wesley interactions on campus to engage new students. First, we started by taking advantage of campus resources as a Registered Student Organization (RSO) to promote Wesley to UTM students and renewing our relationship with the Campus Ministry Association (CMA). We started tabling on the first day of classes to promote our small group study of Adam Hamilton’s book *When Christians Get it Wrong*, and asking members of campus to answer the question “When do Christians get it wrong?” and add their response to our banner.

On February 29, Wesley, along with Skyhawk Catholics, sponsored a campus-wide bingo event in the University Center with 60 participants. Dinner was included in the event and paid for through our RSO status. At Dr. Freeman’s investiture in March, UTM Wesley was represented by two students. Small groups finished off the semester with another of Adam Hamilton’s books, *Half Truths*, and a graduation party.

This semester we also worked on our connectionalism. UTM Wesley hosted a meeting with the Wesley Foundation directors of Murray State (MSU) and Bethel and Dr. Brad Gray to discuss fundraising. We also traveled to Murray to dine and worship with MSU Wesley, and MSU Wesley and Bethel Wesley joined us for dinner and worship. We hope these relationships will continue to grow. UTM Wesley students also visited Martin FUMC and Trinity Presbyterian Churches to join them in worship as a thank you for their continued support.

In preparation for Lent, the students made prayer beads and learned how to use them in their prayer life. UTM Wesley hosted a community Ash Wednesday service with 65 in attendance, a weekly Lenten Community Bible study and Holy Tuesday noon service with 30 people attending.

One of UTM Wesley’s biggest assets is our building. We are across from campus, allowing students a convenient place to escape from campus to relax and/or have a snack. The building has a kitchen, large and small study rooms, school supplies, two computers, a printer, a washer, and dryer. In the laundry room, we also have hygiene supplies, a clothes closet, and a food pantry. Our “Souper Bowl” party helped to restock the food pantry.

The Board of Directors also embraced this season of change. After months of thoughtful discussion and discernment, the board voted to integrate with Martin FUMC thereby strengthening Wesley’s ministry and outreach and gaining a local church partner. The board also examined inactive members, taking the appropriate steps to install new, enthusiastic members. As we look to the future of rebuilding and restructuring, with God’s grace, we know all things are possible. We will continue to grow disciples of Christ so that they may show His love to the world.