

Vanderbilt Wesley Foundation

Rev. Aimee Baxter, Campus Minister, Vanderbilt Wesley Foundation

The Vanderbilt Wesley Foundation had a wonderful year of ministry to the students of Vanderbilt on campus and through our partnership with West End UMC.

We meet weekly for Dinner and Discussion, affectionately known as D&D, on Wednesday evenings for a free meal and student-led discussion. In the Fall, we studied the attributes of God, i.e. God is love, trustworthy, etc. In the Spring, we utilized the Faith and Facts cards produced by Church and Society with a mutual invitation practice. Through these discussions our students were challenged to wider and deeper understandings of God and God's work in the world.

We also participate weekly in Chat and Chew, a ministry of West End UMC, where students are treated to free lunch after the 11:00 AM worship service. During that time, students fellowship and share in a check-in practice sharing the good, the bad, and the godly things they have experienced that week.

Beyond our weekly gatherings, Vandy Wesley students have regularly participated in service and outreach projects with our partner church, West End. These opportunities included a Habitat Build, Great Day of Service, Room in the Inn, and packing menstrual kits for UMCOR disaster relief areas. Additionally, we enjoyed collaborating with West End UMC to lead an All Saints Day worship experience.

Highlights of our year include a trip to Guatemala where students served with Transitions and Casa de Fe. Transitions is a ministry that manufactures wheelchairs, prosthetics, and provides physical therapy to the people of Antigua and beyond. They also have an elite wheelchair basketball team. Casa de Fe ministers to families whose children have surgery in the city by providing them a place to stay. Our team prepared and served dinner for them. We also happened to be in Guatemala the 4th Sunday of Lent and were able to participate in the Guatemalan tradition of Lenten parades that include large floats depicting the crucifixion of Jesus and flower carpets handmade by the locals on the streets.

The other highlight is our yearly event, EasterFest, which is held each Holy Week. EasterFest walks the students on campus through Holy Week in fun and creative ways. This year Maundy Thursday was celebrated with Hawaiian rolls and sparkling grape juice along with the opportunity for students to learn about Project Transformation, a literacy and learning ministry in Nashville. Students experienced Good Friday through packing menstrual kits for UMCOR and writing letters to legislators about the death penalty. Easter brought the opportunity to celebrate new life with planting seedlings and playing together. This event continues to be a gift to the students of Vanderbilt.

We look forward to seeing how God will continue to be at work in and through us as we seek to bring an open, inclusive understanding and experience of God to Vanderbilt.