

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

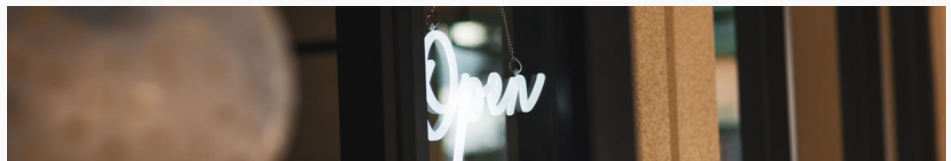


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CELEBRATING ONE YEAR ON CAMPUS



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A WORD FROM RICHIE

To our extended community – our new friends, our old friends, and to our friends we haven't met yet.

What a year. In January we moved into our new home right on UCF's campus and let me tell you – there was no shortage of emotions. Excitement, stress, and relief – we felt it all, and through this experience, we gained valuable insight into what ministering to UCF in the near future will look like. We're making weekly impacts in the lives of these students and on a bigger picture, breaking through negative perceptions of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

To better communicate this, we anonymously surveyed students who entered our building and 15% of them responded. The results from this perceptual survey are quite revealing.

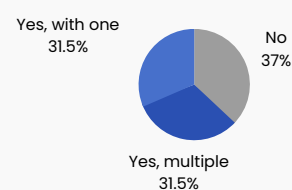
General Perceptions

- 37% said faith was important to them. 26% were neutral. And 37% said faith was not important to them.
- 63% of students shared they've had negative experiences with a church or ministry before. Half of those students had negative experiences with multiple churches.
- 89% of students would NOT be involved with another church or ministry if Wesley did not exist. Why?
 - 37% of students shared that they don't perceive other campus ministries as affirming or inclusive.
 - The remaining 63% was split between a variety of other responses such as liking how Wesley operates, enjoying how convenient Wesley is, atheism, agnosticism, simply not being interested in ministries in general, and not providing a response.
- Overall, 100% of students surveyed who look to identify safe spaces said that they feel safe at Wesley Foundation at UCF, whereas
- 74% of students surveyed felt that other campus ministries are not safe spaces.

With regards to Community Knights,

- 74% of students said that the free meals were very impactful to them and of those students, 43% said that they actively depend on that free meal every week.
- Additionally, 53% of students shared that they've met other students at Community Knight AND they've continued to build on those new relationships outside of Community Knight.

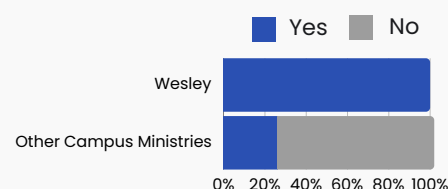
Any negative experiences with another church?



If Wesley didn't exist, would you be involved with another ministry?



Do you consider " _____ " a safe space?



A WORD FROM RICHIE

The data paints a pretty clear picture. We are reaching a demographic that would otherwise not be involved with a campus ministry. This highlights some of the incredible growth we've been experiencing.

Historically, our ministry drew in a higher quantity of students attending our worship services. It's my belief, however, that the majority of students that we historically reached were part of a demographic that was inclined to become involved with a ministry, one way or another. This year we began shifting our focus to better serve those students who are NOT looking for a church experience due to negative experiences they've had in the past. It appears that there is a large number of these students and instead of doubling down on the same approaches we used for the last decade, we're adapting and innovating to the best of our ability while also remaining Christ-centered in all that we do. The results? We are reaching more students and engaging with a significantly more diverse population than ever before due to our re-energized expression of ministry.

Overall, I am incredibly proud of this ministry and what it has done in 2023 and I remain incredibly hopeful for the direction we are heading. The Wesley Foundation at UCF is making real, lasting impacts, and it's giving new hope to those students who otherwise would perceive no hope within church and/or Christianity.

Lastly, I know that our legacy of making meaningful, lasting impacts in the lives of college students would not be possible - or even dreamable - without your support and dedication to the Wesley Foundation. So I invite you to take a look around and read more into the varied ways we are exemplifying Christ to the greater UCF community.

With unimaginable gratitude and enthusiastic hope for the future,

Richie Hartig
Interim Director | Fall 2023



COMMUNITY KNIGHTS



International Thanksgiving Feast

“[Community Knights] are truly an example of a beloved community.”



JESSE, SARAH, & JAMIE

Community Knights at Wesley is a weekly gathering of students from all different backgrounds. We offer a free meal and periodically offer programming like bingo, trivia, art contests, and board games. There is no "catch", which students are always so surprised by. Students are able to come as they are, and have a "third place" where they can study, hang with their friends, and enjoy free food. Wednesday nights are truly an example of a beloved community, and it's a pleasure to be able to help run it each week.

Jesse Stokes

COMMUNITY KNIGHTS



FRESHLEY

FRESHLEY



Studying w/ coffee



Nathan, Freshley Co-leader

Why Freshley?

I began coming to Wesley in the second semester of my freshman year. I was raised non-denominational but hadn't been practicing in almost ten years before college, and didn't expect to connect with it then.

However, I had seen things about Wesley on the Instagram of one of my freshman friends. When I asked her about Wesley, she specifically highlighted its inclusivity and the welcoming nature of students and staff. I hadn't yet made many friends, so I decided to attend the next Tuesday worship.

I was nervous, having been distant from my faith for so long, but I was met with warm introductions and seamlessly included in their conversations. I was invited to the Wednesday Community Night and Thursday Freshman small group, Freshley. From that week on I came to those three nights, and often stopped into the space during the day to speak with Rev. Erwin. I quickly formed friendships with fellow students, and Wesley was the main reason why I began to feel comfortable at UCF.

Because of my experience as an uncertain freshman, and the immensely positive impact Wesley's community had on me, I very much wanted to provide the same support that I had in the spring. Myself and my co-leader Grace Plonsky both see that as the main benefit of Freshley, the ability to help freshmen feel more secure away from home and within their faith.

-Nate

MONEY MONDAY

MONEY MONDAYS



Growing Financial Literacy in Gen Z

MONEY MONDAY

With I first started Money Mondays I was excited to help teach about the world of finance. I loved finance as a hobby, and I was excited to share it with similar minded students. Now after 6 lessons of Money Mondays I feel even greater about this passion. I believe that many of the people that watch feel the same way. Most of our lessons are on how to better your financial life. Whether that is savings, investments or staying out of debt. We want to give the students hope that that can achieve financial greatness in many different ways that work for them.

-Jackson



Jackson, Money Mondays Co-leader

REWINDING FAITH

REWINDING FAITH



Reading John's Gospel

The Vision



Left to Right; Christen, Kyler, & Richie

As our ministry continues to grow and change I knew that I wanted to challenge and equip our students in a different way. I wanted the Bible to become a tool of liberation, not an instrument of indoctrination. I wanted Jesus's words and actions to speak for themselves instead of using a verse out of context here and there. I wanted our students to see for themselves the transformative and universal nature of Christ as depicted in the gospel, and I wanted it to be real. And I also wanted them to look at the gospel with a fresh perspective.

This proves to be tricky since so many people know or think they know the story of Jesus. Even more challenging is that many are inadvertently conditioned to not think and read for themselves or they read everything through the lens of American evangelicalism instead of through a Christ-centered lens.

In order to break past some of those barriers, we spent the entire semester reading the entire Gospel of John. These weren't nicely wrapped 3-point sermons that last exactly 22.5 minutes. These weren't themed discussions that used some verses here and there to support an agenda. We read anywhere from 1-3 chapters a week and we read them in reverse order. Starting with John 21 and ending with John 1 during our last and final worship night of the semester.

We read them backwards in order to unpack the narrative. We would ask, Why did Jesus do that? What happened prior? What led them to this point? Then we would read the previous chapter(s) and ask the same questions. We did this all the way - essentially rewinding through John's gospel. We also kept tabs on the voice and tone of the text and try to pick up on John's character and personality through it all.

In the end, our students can confidently say they read the gospel and more importantly, they did it themselves. We read, asked, discussed, and learned in an open and safe environment and it was beautiful, empowering, and liberating.

RELIGIOUS ABUSE SUPPORT GROUP

SUPPORT GROUP



Providing safe spaces for healing without judgement or blame shifting

RELIGIOUS ABUSE SUPPORT GROUP

The support group for Survivors of Religious abuse meets on Thursdays at 4:30 PM at the Wesley Center on the UCF campus. This is an open membership group for persons who may be attending school or living on campus. Most of the students who participate are dealing with conflictual issues of past negative experiences with spirituality and religion. Many come from communities that do not support issues like inclusion and diversity in theology and belief systems. When coming to school, they are learning about different cultures and experiences that may be different from their own and are feeling conflictual with what faith and God may mean to this present age and culture. Some participants are part of the LGBTQ community and are feeling the sense of freedom as they learn about their identity. Others may be dealing with a past negative trauma or verbal abuse from their religious communities. Wesley at UCF provides an inclusive safe space that allows for participants to freely speak about their personal faith and find a space for healing and restoration during this challenging time in life. All are welcome to attend.



Rev. Stanley Ramos MSW / M. DIV

THE WESLEY GRANT

WESLEY GRANT



Providing hope, relief, and stability

THE WESLEY GRANT

A Beacon of Hope for Students

The Wesley Foundation has been a beacon of hope for the University of Central Florida students who have found themselves struggling with homelessness, food insecurity, and housing insecurity. Wesley at UCF has played a pivotal role in enabling students to excel academically and personally. Many students who are referred to Student Care Services for assistance are referred to Wesley, where they receive exceptional care and support that has a profound, life-changing effect on their lives.

Wesley's commitment to students is evident in the way they support their academic and personal objectives. The foundation offers free meals, scholarships, financial aid, and access to community resources, among other things, to enable students to reach their full potential. With your continued support, we can provide students with the resources they require to succeed at UCF and beyond. We are grateful for your investment in our students' future.

Tammie Nadeau, Ed. D.
Assistant Director | Student Care Services
University of Central Florida

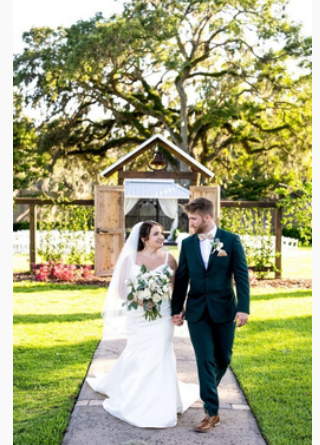


A GROWING FAMILY



GROWING THE WESLEY FAM

2023 Weddings & Babies



A NOTE FROM OUR BOARD | WRITTEN BY ZACH COLBY

I had the privilege of being a part of Wesley at UCF for the 4 years I was at the University of Central Florida. Being a 7-hour drive from home, the community became family away from home to me. Together, we lived out all the seasons that Solomon discusses in Ecclesiastes 3; a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. Through the joys and sorrows of short (or long for some) college years, we built bonds that will last a lifetime. We have been in each other's weddings and are now going to each other's children's baptisms. I am forever grateful for the over a decade-strong relationships that I can always rely on.

In addition to building a tightknit community, Wesley at UCF has also equipped its alumni with the tools to lead and a heart for the local church. I was on the leadership team and led community groups at Wesley at UCF and continued doing the same at First UMC of Melbourne when moving to the Space Coast with my wife, Alyssa. With the experience gained from Wesley at UCF, Alyssa and I jumped right into leading community groups, serving on various boards and of course recruiting members of our church congregation to support Wesley at UCF.

Serving on the board for 3 years now has been a very rewarding experience. My favorite part of each board meeting is the beginning when a current student at Wesley at UCF gives a short presentation on their experience at the ministry. I love hearing the joy in their voice as they talk about the transformation of their own life and their peers' lives because of this ministry. Serving on the board has also been a very humbling experience. I have not been out of college long, but the struggles that these students are facing now are vastly different from the hardships I experienced.

A NOTE FROM OUR BOARD | WRITTEN BY ZACH COLBY

These students have gone through so much in the last few years; a global pandemic, leading to virtual community and teaching, an uptick in mental health issues, etc. Wesley at UCF's presence in the UCF and local Orlando community has always been important, but its impact and need in the community seems to be higher than ever now.

As I reflect on my time on the board, I am so proud of the leaders of this ministry for setting up Wesley at UCF for generations of success with its new on-campus space. This was a dream that we discussed since I started attending Wesley in 2012. Through the on-campus location, we have reached a whole new demographic of students and built a unique relationship with UCF that we never would have imagined.

The ministry is in an excellent spot, not only literally with the physical location, but spiritually and financially. If you have a heart for college students, I would strongly encourage you to consider joining the board. We need a diverse group of members from various backgrounds to steer the ministry into wherever God is calling it to go next.

On behalf of the entire board, thank you to all our supporters for your time, donations and prayers, Wesley at UCF is forever grateful for your gifts and impact.

Zach Colby
Board Member, Wesley at UCF Class of 2016



Zach, Alyssa, Theo, & Xena

THANKS FOR PARTNERING WITH US


DONATIONS & NEEDS

Thank you for your continued support of the Wesley Foundation at UCF. Every student who experiences hope, relief, and/or community through Wesley at UCF does so as a direct result of our incredible network of alumni, parents, friends, and community partners. None of this is possible without your generosity and financial contributions.

Additionally, we are also looking for a golf cart and for additional board members. So if anyone has connections in their network for either, please let us know! We'd love to chat about that.

Make checks payable to Wesley at UCF.
4217 East Plaza
PO Box 662147
Orlando, FL 32816

To donate online, please visit
www.WesleyatUCF.org/donate



“Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.”

John Wesley