



# The Slackwood Grapevine

Slackwood Presbyterian Church  
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Rev. David Bowman, Interim Pastor  
Starr Alleyne, Director of Family Ministries  
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## INTERIM PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

*If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and night wraps itself around 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: 11,12

*In the depths of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.*

Albert Camus

I find, like some of you, that the days after the holidays, the first weeks of the new year, can feel heavy and dark. The joyous energy of the holidays is behind us. The sparkle and light of the decorations have been put away for another year. The sun sets earlier than my soul needs it to. There is a longing, an aching for light, for a lifting of the shadowiness. Mistakenly, I have tried to artificially fill these days with busyness, which does little more than add to my weariness.



For a number of reasons this year, I have felt even more weighed down by the heaviness of these days. But just when the light seems to be nearing its dimmest, God reawakens my hope, piercing the darkness. A call from my daughter and grandson, a verse of scripture, a line from a hymn, a cardinal on the branch outside our bedroom window, the laughter of children at play, a meal shared with friends, a morning spent with church family packing meal bags, a kind word genuinely spoken... "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it!"



What hope is ours! With the Psalmist, we are reminded that "even the darkness is not dark to you (God)".

So be encouraged! If you too find yourself in a spiritual winter, hold on, the light, though seemingly dim, is on the horizon. Look around you. As a community of faith, we hold the light of Christ for one another.

May it be so!

Pastor David  
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## LENTEN STUDY



The season of Lent, the 40 days before Easter, is a good time to engage in study, prayer and reflection. This year, we will be offering a group study of the book, **Pause: Spending Lent with the Psalms Paperback** by Elizabeth Caldwell. We will be meeting on Thursday evenings, February 15- March 21, at 7pm via Zoom.

If you would like to participate, please let Mark Thomas or David Bowman know. Books will be provided.

## STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

*Giving is more than a responsibility –  
it is a privilege;  
more than an act of obedience –  
it is evidence of our faith.*

William Arthur Ward

## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the congregation of Slackwood Presbyterian Church has been called by the session for Sunday, January 28, 2024 immediately following the morning service of worship to elect elders, deacons and congregational representatives to the officer nominating committee, as well as any other business set by the session. The new officers will be ordained/installed during worship on February 4.

## MLK DAY OF SERVICE



Thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone who showed up on Martin Luther King Day of Service and packed meal bags for the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. Thank you, too, to those who delivered the bags to TASK. 225 bags were packed with items donated by the congregation during the Advent Season. It was a great time of work and fellowship.

## WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Christmas season was a busy one at Slackwood. Thank you to all who helped by participating in a worship service, sang, or shared their musical talents, decorated, set up, broke down, or brought in a nativity for our sanctuary. Thank you also to Beth Clark who keeps our offering plates beautiful and shiny. The Worship Committee appreciates all of you.

The “Blue Christmas” service held on December 21<sup>st</sup> was well received and appreciated by all who attended. The committee hopes to hold this very important service each year to support those who may be grieving during the holidays.

The annual Christmas pageant on December 24<sup>th</sup>, during the morning worship service, had many volunteers who helped tell the story of Jesus' birth, and the joy and hope of the season was present in the sanctuary during our evening service on Christmas Eve.



Ash Wednesday will be observed on February 14. On that evening between 4:00 and 6:30pm, six prayer and reflection stations will be set up in the sanctuary. Each will have a different focus relating to the spiritual themes of Ash Wednesday. You are invited to come and have your own Ash Wednesday experience at your own pace on this self-guided prayer walk. Members of the Worship Committee will be available to help answer questions and get you started. At the 6<sup>th</sup> and final station, the Reverend David Bowman will impose the ashes and give a blessing. All are invited.



As we enter the new year, we hope you will continue to support our committee by ushering, being a liturgist, participating in the choir, or attending our monthly planning meetings. Please see a member of the worship committee if you have questions or are interested.

If you wish to be a part of the worship committee, our next meeting will be held on January 28<sup>th</sup>. All are welcome to attend.

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

*"Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long."* -Psalm 25:4-5

The Christian Education Committee is grateful for all of those individuals who made the Christmas Pageant a success. This year the pageant was celebrated on Christmas Eve. Many people came to the morning Worship Service and the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.



The committee hosted an intergenerational activity in the spirit of Christmas. Many people were surprised by the trivia as they discovered many things they believed about the Christmas story that are commonly accepted, but can't be found in scripture. The committee hopes to host another intergenerational activity this coming spring.



Our youth continue to engage in Confirmation Preparation sessions on Sunday mornings. They continue to need our prayers as they are learning to really articulate what they understand about the faith of the Presbyterian Church. They are also undergoing the process of discerning what their faith means to them and what their next steps will be as they are led by the Holy Spirit.

All are invited to join the Adult Forum as they study "The Victorious Christ -- A Study of the Book of Revelation" by C. Freeman Sleeper. The group continues to meet on Sunday mornings at 9am via Zoom. The group also continues to lift up the members' prayer concerns on a weekly basis.

Please continue to keep all of our children and youth and their families in prayer. Many lead busy lives, but we always want to keep nurturing our faith as our highest priority.

## TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

*“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.” -Hebrews 6:10*

The Truth and Reconciliation Group had an amazing year of service in the area of awareness and advocacy. The meetings were well attended throughout the year. The members have been extremely faithful to their work to make a difference in action as well as sharing concern for those who are marginalized primarily due to their ethnic background.



For the second year in a row the group participated in “Vote Forward,” organized by Bill Mansmann. This entailed writing letters encouraging voters to get out and vote. This prompting is known to impact voters to follow through and vote.

Earlier in the year the group explored the issue of unjust incarceration and the issues related to this problem through the book and movie of the same title “Just Mercy.” This event was in honor of Juneteenth. The group concluded the year with honoring Human Rights Day by taking a trip to the Stoutsburg Sourland African-American Museum in Skillman, N.J. The group also held a Human Rights Day Prayer Service.

The Truth and Reconciliation group continues to meet the second Thursday of the month at 7pm via Zoom. The group welcomes participation in the discussion or planning of activities, even if it’s only as your schedule permits. Please consider joining in on a meeting or supporting one of our activities this coming year.



## 2024 OFFERING ENVELOPES

Sets of offering envelopes have been distributed. However, if you did not receive a set and would like one, contact Bill Mansmann at 609-651-1321 and he will be glad to furnish you with a set of offering envelopes. Having a set of envelopes facilitates the creation of a statement for your record of giving.

## SNOW! SNOW! SNOW!



This is the time of the year to move snow around when it arrives. We have snow shovels, ice melt and a terrific snow blower available for use. Generally, we are covered, but help is always welcomed at the church. If you are able to lend a hand please speak with Bill Mansmann or call him at 609-651-1321.

## 2024 PER CAPITA FEE

The Presbytery set the Per Capita fee for 2024 at \$40.00 per member. These funds support the work of the greater church. It is important that each member of our church participate and contribute the Per Capita Fee. Any shortfall in receiving the Per Capita fee is paid from the general funds of the church and that reduces funds available for other needs of the church.

## **PROPERTY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Committee will meet following worship on February 11, 2024, in the church library. If you would like to join us as we consider items for the maintenance of the church grounds, let Bill Mansmann or Ginger Baker know of your interest. Also, if you have any ideas or concerns, please let Bill or Ginger know of them.

## **WITH DEEPEST SORROW**

With the excitement and joy of the holiday season, it is always difficult to realize that life's most devastating times can still occur in the midst of our celebrations. The Slackwood Church family is no exception to these experiences as they suffered two unexpected and upsetting losses with the deaths of Todd Mansmann on December 23<sup>rd</sup> and Arlene Filson on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Our deepest sympathies and heartfelt prayers are extended to their families as we all learn to come to terms with such tragic events.

### **Todd Mansmann**

Todd was Terrie and Bill Mansmann's youngest son and Ginger Baker's and Dennis Mansmann's brother, participating in Sunday School and church activities as a youth and helping out with special events whenever he was needed. His smile was infectious, his sense of humor and fun always ready to entertain. To just share my own personal experiences as his Sunday School teacher many years ago, I can only say he was one of the most special kids I had in my class (and there were many special kids!), but one memory sticks in my mind I'd like to share. Sometimes as kids grow up going to Sunday School and hearing all the bible stories and lessons, they may not grasp the fact that bible "stories" are not just stories like "Frozen" or "Sleeping Beauty", and Todd had heard them so many times that maybe he hadn't put it all together yet or maybe I'd failed as a teacher to impart upon him that they were not just tales. So in the middle of my little class, as we all talked about some lesson taken from the bible, Todd – I guess he was about 11 or so -- suddenly looked up in shock and said, "You mean all this stuff REALLY HAPPENED? It's all real, not just stories?" Needless to say, his outburst was met with a little scorn and dismay from some of the other kids, but actually witnessing Todd's epiphany was one of the most memorable moments of my Sunday School teaching years. He was special. He will be missed but for this old retired Sunday School teacher, he will always be remembered. Please pray for his family to find comfort and understanding through our gracious Lord and Savior.

### ***Thanks from Terrie & Bill***

*Thank you for all your prayers and expressions of love on the death of our son Todd. The calls, visits and cards brought tears to our eyes and moments of comfort as we read each card and the wonderful notes about Todd. We also smiled and had a chuckle when someone mentioned Todd's antics as a child at church.*

*Todd was also touched by his Slackwood family. He may not have responded, but he loved and kept all the notes and letters that he received from you. They meant a lot to him.*

*Again, to our Slackwood family, many thanks for your prayers, love and support. We take comfort that Todd is at peace and in God's loving arms.*

*Terrie & Bill Mansmann*

## **Arlene Filson**

Arlene leaves behind her devoted family, son Brad and daughter Karla and their children, her sister Marilyn Stebbins and many nieces and nephews. She also leaves behind a church family who loved her very much for her faithful service to Slackwood for many, many years. Arlene's dedication to our church was impeccable through her many roles including deacon, elder, committee chairs, usher, rummage sale worker, auditor, and most eminent the Slackwood Kitchen Queen who kept us all straight on which cabinet or drawer every single item belonged in and how best to clean the counters and the sink. Although recent years of health issues had taken her away from the services she so proudly provided, she continued to be a faithful member and interacted and participated in our missions from her wheelchair at St. Joseph's in Lawrenceville. Her always positive and optimistic spirit was why I called her "my hero" because she taught me more about perseverance and faithfulness from that wheelchair than I could ever have learned elsewhere. She will be missed but her memory will live in our hearts forever. Please pray for comfort for her family as they grieve Arlene's passing.

A week or so prior to Arlene's death, I received the following note from her which unfortunately missed getting into the December newsletter:

*Hello all!*

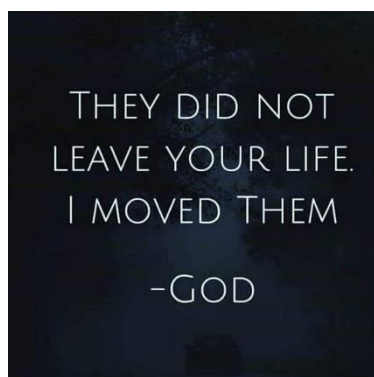
*To all church members at Slackwood:*

*Thank you for many visits to me from the members, plus phone calls. God bless you as we are nearing a New Year. All visits are truly appreciated.*

*Arlene Filson*

## **DEACONS' CORNER**

Thank you to Sandra Thomas, for her coordination, the deacons, and all those church members who donated refreshments for Arlene Filson's Witness to the Resurrection church funeral service. As one of our deacons likes to say, she is proud to call Slackwood her home church, especially when we show our outpouring of love and caring for others.



Please check our calendar online for upcoming meetings and events:  
<http://www.slackwoodchurch.org/event-calendar.html>