



# The Slackwood Grapevine

Slackwood Presbyterian Church  
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Rev. Ryan Irmer, Pastor  
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December 2018

*While they were there, the time came for (Mary) to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. -Luke 2:6-7*

I'm assuming that the verses above are pretty familiar ones. Perhaps you have them memorized. Perhaps when you were younger, you actually recited those words before ongoing parents and churchgoers at a Christmas pageant. I remember being in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and our Sunday School teachers decided to "spice up" the Christmas story. That year's Christmas pageant had UFO's, aliens appearing at the nativity scene, and all sorts of cool stuff surrounding the story of Jesus' arrival.

It's a pretty amazing the story of God coming to earth, being born while surrounded by livestock. Let's not forget the shepherds who were visited by an army of angels. Yet this story has become ordinary and ho-hum. Wonder and awe and amazement don't fill our hearts and minds the way it did when we first heard it. Sadly, too often **we take the Christmas story for granted**, don't we?

This morning I visited a couple where the wife is recovering miraculously after a calamitous fall and blow to her head. I asked them, "How has your faith impacted all that you've been through?" The husband shared that these past few weeks helped him recognize many of the various aspects of his life that he had been taking for granted: His wife. His Family. His Health. His relationship with God. **In light of recent challenges and hardships, he saw life differently now.**

After a great time visiting and praying together, I said goodbye and went and visited one of our oldest Slackwood members. She admitted that though time is slowing her down and that she's not as energetic as she used to be, she is fortunate that she remains healthy and sharp. **She too, does not take her life, God's many blessings, or her health for granted.**

After a prayer I said goodbye and checked my phone. I had a message from my wife which said that her school, (and all schools within the Lawrence School District) were under "lockdown" because of a bomb threat and an additional threat of someone with a gun arriving onto campus. Hours later, I received an "all clear" message from the school district explaining it to be a false alarm and that

everyone was safe. I too began to be extremely grateful for things that I often take for granted: my wife and daughter, our school district, our police officers. I saw things differently.

Here is my point, I know that many of you are currently going through very challenging times. Perhaps you or a loved one's health is failing. Perhaps your work is overwhelming and exhausting. Perhaps your children or grandchildren are making some pretty poor choices. Perhaps you continue to be anxious about the direction of our nation or our planet. Let me ask you this, **"Can what you're going through help you to recognize where God is working? Can what you're experiencing provide you with a new perspective on life, faith, & your relationship w/ God?"**

We don't need to add to or change the story of Christ's coming to keep it interesting or relevant. Maybe we just need to embrace the challenges we're facing as opportunities to discover something new. I hope that what you may be going through can allow you see to the story of Christ's coming in a new light. **And may that new insight provide your life with hope, strength & comfort.**

Your Pastor,

Ryan



## SESSION MEETING – NOVEMBER 14, 2018

At its regularly scheduled meeting in November elders:

- learned that the minute book and church register is scheduled for review by the Presbytery on December 8;
- set the date for the annual congregational meeting for Sunday, January 27 immediately following the morning service of worship;
- learned that the Christmas pageant will be held on December 23;
- voted to make a contribution to the Slackwood Volunteer Fire Department;
- voted to approve replacing the roof on the manse by Precision 1;
- voted to have Steve Stull plow the church parking lot when there are two inches or more of snow;
- voted to repair two windows for the Christian Education Building.

## PROPERTY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

The next meeting of the committee will take place following worship on Sunday December 9, 2018. We will be discussing items that can be completed over the winter. If you have any suggestions for these topics contact Bill Mansmann at 609-651-1321 or feel free to attend the meeting and share your thoughts.

## 2019 OFFERING ENVELOPES

Offering envelopes for 2019 will be available on Sunday December 9, 2018 for pickup in the church sanctuary. If a set has not been created for you and you would like one, contact Bill Mansmann at 609-651-1321 and he will be glad to furnish you with a set of envelopes.

## 2019 PER CAPITA FEE

The 2019 Per Capita fee is \$34.50 for each member of each church in the Presbytery. These funds support the work of the greater

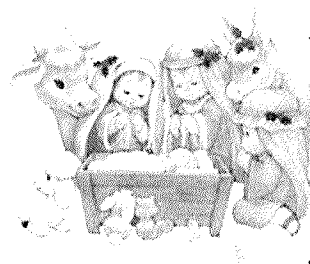
church – Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly. It is important that each member of our church participate and contribute their Per Capita Fee. Any shortfall in receiving the Per Capita fee is paid from the general funds of the church that reduces funds available for other needs within Slackwood Church.

## MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB

The Men of the church are invited to join in our breakfast meeting at 9:00 am at the church on Friday December 21, 2018. We will have bagels for breakfast provided by Dirk Hofman! Something different! Following our meal we will continue our fellowship by completing small jobs around the church. Mark your calendar and join us on December 21, 2018! Also, note that the January meeting will be on Friday January 18, 2019! Happy New Year!!!



## CHRISTMAS PAGEANT FOR EVERYONE!!!! DECEMBER 23<sup>th</sup>



Our pageant time for everyone is almost here! This year you again will have an opportunity to be an active participant in the nativity scene.

**Please plan to arrive at 10:00 am that Sunday** for the 10:30 am church service. In fellowship hall we will have costumes and people to help you get dressed for the nativity story. There will be costumes for angels, shepherds, various barn animals, and townspeople. Once the worship service begins, a narration based on the Gospel of Luke's telling of Jesus' birth is shared with the congregation. At various breaks in the narration, while the congregation sings a corresponding song, folks with certain costumes will go to the front of the sanctuary and help create a live nativity scene. There will be instructions in the bulletin when your group is to join the nativity scene. **THERE ARE NO SPEAKING PARTS.** If you only want to sit in

the pews and watch the story, that is okay too. We hope you will mark your calendars for this special worship service and be a part of the Christmas spirit of joy, hope, peace, and love.

## CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

Once again this year Slackwood Church will participate in the Christmas Joy Offering of the PCUSA. Fifty percent of your gifts to the offering make it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges and fifty percent of your gifts provide assistance for current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs. Envelopes for your contribution will be available in the Sunday bulletin or you can make your check out to Slackwood Presbyterian Church, and write "Joy Offering" on the memo line. Please give generously to this special offering.

## MARTIN LUTHER DAY OF SERVICE

The Membership & Outreach Committee is sponsoring a King Day of Service to be held on Monday, January 21. This once again conjunction with the Lawrence Middle School and will be held at their facility. The church bus will take anyone who needs a ride to the middle school. Watch the Sunday bulletin, and Sunday email announcements for specific information and times.



Martin Luther Service to be held in conjunction with the

## ANNUAL MEETING/ANNUAL REPORT



The annual congregational meeting has been called for Sunday, January 27, 2019 following the morning service of worship. In order for the **annual report** to be ready to distribute the week before the meeting, all reports must be in to Clerk of Session Carol Belles no later than January

10. If you chair a committee or group within the church, or are a treasurer, you need to submit a report to the Clerk to be included in the annual report. You may send the report to Carol via email or hand it to her any Sunday.

## SPIRITUAL MESSAGE

By Cathy Salvatore

### WATCH AND PRAY

Read: Luke 21:34-36

Marana tha! Come Lord Jesus!

Jesus urges us to watch and pray as we await his coming again. Christ is concerned with our salvation and the salvation of others. With virtue we must learn good moral conscious. His second coming of Jesus in the fullness of his power.

We are to wait and watch his vigil. For an example, when a woman is pregnant she has to wait her nine months before the baby is born. So, we must wait and be faithful Servants.

It is a time of growth and healing during this waiting process. We are to visit the sick, help the poor, and console those who are grieving in deadly sin, to be compassionate and offer continual prayers for them in God's presence. Rejoice with those who are glad because they are true servants of Jesus Christ.

This is how we are faithful rather than faithless servants. Jesus tells us to pray to gain our strength for his second coming.

Be faithful Watchful Servants.

