



# The Slackwood Grapevine

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December 2017

## The Rhythm of Advent

Each month I take the time to meet with a Spiritual Director. My spiritual director helps me reflect on what is going on in my life and then guides me forward in ways that hopefully bring me closer to God. At the last meeting, I mentioned that I was looking forward to having a week off of work. After some discussion, he recommended that I make a concerted effort to use that week to establish a rhythm that was different from what I normally do. Though it was hard, this was something that I strived to achieve and helped rejuvenate me during my time off.

As we enter into the season of Advent, I would recommend the same advice to all of you, "Establish a rhythm to your day or week that is different from what you are accustomed to." One way we can do that is by beginning our day with an Advent devotional or by coming on Tuesday evenings and spending time in a small group setting discussing Advent, our thoughts, and our lives. What are some other ways that would help you establish a different rhythm than what you are used to this during this Advent season?

When we establish a new and different rhythm than what we are accustomed to we begin to:

- 1) Break out of the "rut" that our lives may have gotten stuck in;
- 2) Notice new and different aspects of life that we otherwise wouldn't;
- 3) Regain focus on what is truly important in our lives and allow our priorities to get reoriented;
- 4) Create space for God to enter our lives and transform us in ways that bring new life.

May this Holiday season not be about the hectic rhythms that so easily ensnare us as our lives move faster and get filled with more and more. As life around us speeds up, may we make the conscientious choice to slow down our rhythm. To enjoy a hot cup of tea, coffee, or apple cider without distractions. To go for a walk around our neighborhood. To turn off the screens and visit with our loved ones. To write notes to people we love that haven't heard from us in a while. To begin and end our day in prayer. To read a good book. The rhythm we choose to live by during this Holiday season might be the difference between being left drained, overextended, and frustrated versus entering into the new year feeling reenergized, refocused, and renewed.

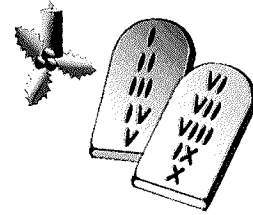
*When (the wise men) saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid Him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.*

Matthew 2:10-12

Your Pastor,

Ryan

## The Ten Commandments of Christmas



Thou shalt not leave Christ out of Christmas.

Thou shalt not value thy gifts by their cost.

Thou shalt give thyself with thy gifts – thy love, thy personality, and thy service.

Thou shalt not let Santa Claus take the place of Christ.

Thou shalt not burden thy servants. The sales girl, the mail carrier, and the merchant shall have thy consideration.

Thou shalt not neglect attendance at thy church.

Thou shalt not neglect the needy. Let thy bountiful blessings be shared with the many who will go hungry and cold unless thou art generous at Christmas.

Thou shalt become in spirit as a little child.

Thou shalt prepare thy soul for Christmas while getting gifts ready.

Thou shalt give thy heart to Christ. Let thy Christmas list have Christ at the top and thy heart as thy gift. In doing so, thou art as the Wise Men of old and verily thou shalt find thyself born again on Christmas Day.



Anonymous

## SLACKWOOD PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Slackwood PW will meet at 12 noon on December 21. Please bring a sandwich; dessert will be provided.

Lesson for 4th lesson in curriculum will be Genesis 28:10-22; Daniel 3:8-20; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:5-17,1:26-38, 2:8-14; Hebrews 1:3-14;13:1-2.

## ADVENT DISCUSSION GROUP DECEMBER 5, 12, AND 19, 6:30 PM-7:30 PM



Are you looking for the true meaning of Christmas? Tired of hearing about Santa, presents, and shopping as the season's focus? Join our church members on **Tuesday nights** during the Advent Season. We will be reading and discussing Walter Brueggemann's book: "Devotions for Advent, Celebrating Abundance". Each day there are short, two-page devotions which we will discuss during meetings on Dec 5, 12, and 19 at 6:30-7:30 PM. Our pastor, the Rev. Ryan Irmer will lead us. If you are interested in joining us, please see Terrie Mansmann for a copy of the discussion book.

## PROPERTY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

The next meeting of the committee will take place following worship on Sunday December 10, 2017. 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.

## 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 15, 2017. 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 15, 2017!



## MESSY CHURCH – DECEMBER 17TH

Please join us as we gather together again for another Messy Church during this advent season! On December 17th, at 9:30 AM we will be making Christmas ornaments as an intergenerational faith community before the pageant service at 10:30. Come join the fun!

## CHRISTMAS PAGEANT FOR EVERYONE!! DECEMBER 17<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. At **9:30 AM** that morning we will have our "Messy Church" program where all ages come together. During that time, we will help people dress in costumes. If you are not attending that program, **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.



## ANNUAL MEETING/ANNUAL REPORT

The date of the church's annual congregational meeting has been set for Sunday, January 28, 2018 following the morning service of worship. In order for the annual report to be distributed the week before the meeting, all reports must be in to Clerk of Session Carol Belles no later than January 12. If you are the chairperson of a committee, the moderator of a group, or a treasurer, you need to submit an annual report. If you are not sure if you need to file a report, check last year's annual report, or speak with the Clerk of Session. And don't feel that you have to wait till January 12 to turn in your report. Feel free to do so as soon as it is ready.

## 2018 OFFERING ENVELOPES

Offering envelopes for 2018 will be available on Sunday December 10, 2017 for pickup in the church sanctuary. If a set has not been created for you and you would like one, contact Bill Mansmann at 651-1321 and he will be glad to furnish you with a set of envelopes.

## 2018 PER CAPITA FEE

The 2018 Per Capita fee is \$33.25 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.

## MARTIN LUTHER KING SERVICE DAY



Martin Luther King Day will be observed on Monday, January 15. Once again this year the Membership & Outreach Committee will be sponsoring an opportunity for church members to participate in a service project to benefit people in need. Initial conversations focus on a project in conjunction with one or more of the township schools. Keep the date free and watch for specific information as it becomes available.

## CONGRATULATIONS, JAMES!

James Klotz first became part of Slackwood Church when he completed his seminary field education requirement while in the Master of Divinity degree program at Princeton Seminary. A mutual love quickly developed between James and Slackwood and so James continued to worship at Slackwood during his senior year in seminary. James is currently in the Ph.D program at Princeton and has adopted Slackwood as his home church. Through James we came to know and also love Patrick McComas and we celebrated with them their marriage last January.

James has been a candidate for ministry under care of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta and they have certified him ready to receive a call. The session of Slackwood asked the Presbytery of New Brunswick to validate James' participation in the ministry of Slackwood Church and approve him for ordination. That action took place at the presbytery meeting on November 14. We are thrilled that James can now plan his ordination service that will take place after the first of the new year at Slackwood Church. James will be helping with pastoral care and home communions and will serve in other ways that match his gifts.

Look for more information on James' ordination and plan to attend and celebrate this important time in the life of Slackwood and in James' life.

## SPIRITUAL MESSAGE

By Cathy Salvatore

Read: Luke 21-1-4

The Gospel tells us of the poor widow who gave her last penny to the Temple treasury. Her behavior tells us how we should consider our possessions. We feel we cannot be happy if we don't have all the things that we should have or that we want to have to engage us in this life. We become a constant quest to get, to acquire, to attain our possessions.

In the parable about the foolish rich man, his barns were filled with all his possessions, and he decided to tear them down and build a bigger one. Why was he a foolish man? Because he didn't realize he had everything right now to be happy.

Try to be generous, with the extra we might have to share. The widow had a deep sacrifice and it was a testimony of her total love for the Lord!

## GRACE TAIWANESE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEW PASTORS – Robert and Sally Chang

Please join us in welcoming the new pastors for our sister church, Grace Taiwanese Presbyterian. Below they share some brief information about themselves.

- *Rev. Robert.T.N Chang graduated from Tainan Theological Seminary M.Div. in 1972, Taiwan.*
- *Rev. Sally H.H Chang graduated from Taiwan Theological Seminary, M.Div. in 1988, Taipei, Taiwan.*
- *In 1980, Robert graduated from Asbury Seminary, Kentucky with MAR.*
- *In 1996, we both went to Indiana, graduated from the Indianapolis University of MA with Applied Sociology*

*We pastored two Presbyterian churches in Taiwan for 10 years, then were invited to Tunghai University to be the Chaplain of Tunghai University and a Deputy Director of Family Wellness Center, Lecturer, in the College of the Arts, in 1987.*

*At the same time, with the missionary couple, who were from PCUSA. Dr. Paul & Lucy. Alexzander, established "The Family Wellness Center of Tunghai University", to promote and enhance the couple and family life, to help the Provincial Department of Education, adult lifelong education*

*Book publication:*

*Growth in Marriage, Hand Book of Marriage and Family. Face to Face Communication, Is it ready to love?*

*Editor: The Spring for the Disabled Child, Marriage and Family Magazine (15 years)*

*Since then, for 30 years until now, we are still working for gender, couple communication and family life education, to promote and enhance marriage enrichment program for the society of Taiwan and oversea countries. We were trained as a leader couple by ACME (The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment in USA, 1985-1994). To have the proclamations for the love of Jesus, could we practice the love of Jesus in our marriage and family life as well.*

*Praise the Lord and thank God. Since we had been sent by God to serve the Grace Taiwanese Presbyterian Church, this is such a great opportunity. We wish to serve with all our hearts, and with all our minds to the people of God!*