



The Slackwood Grapevine

Slackwood Presbyterian Church
2020 Brunswick Avenue
Lawrenceville, New Jersey 08648-4606

Office: (609) 392-3258

Fax: (609) 392-1650

Website: www.slackwoodchurch.org

Rev. Ryan Irmer, Pastor
Director of Music: Shelley Zuckerman

October 2017

Christian Values or Christian Virtues

We probably all have words or terms that, for some reason, make us uncomfortable or simply don't sit well with us. Recently I was having a great conversation with a friend and the term, "Christian Values" kept being used. And I couldn't figure out why that term made me feel so uncomfortable.

So I discussed this personal discomfort with my Spiritual Director later that day. He asked me, "Ryan, what images does that term bring up for you?" My response was that "Christian Values" made me think of being judgmental towards those who don't share my same values; or that it is being used as a kind of weapon in an ongoing culture war between the religious and secular. Finally, "Christian Values" made me think of something that was more external and something we try to impose onto others. If you were to Google "Christian Values" much of what you would find would deal with how one defines marriage, what one considers moral and immoral behavior in terms of sexual conduct, and where one stands on the issue of abortion. All of these issues have been extremely divisive and have caused fissures within our churches, our denominations, and our country at large.

How grateful I am for my Spiritual Director, who then asked me the follow up question, "What do you think of when you hear the term 'Christian Virtues'?" Immediately that term felt totally different to me! It lifted my spirits rather than weighing me down. When I think of "Christian Virtues", I think of something that, when we experience the love and grace of God, grows out of us. Christian Virtues are the fruit we bear whenever we are connected with God. It is not something external or something we try to impose on others, it is something internal. Rather than being motivated by extrinsic forces, "Christian Virtues" are an intrinsic motivation that compels us to live a certain way. When I think of "Christian Virtues", I think of Paul's famous passage in Galatians 5:22-23:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

What would our lives/churches/country look like if Christians were motivated by such virtues that Paul described? My hope and our prayer is that God's grace transforms us so that our lives bear the Fruit of the Spirit. And that because of our relationship with God, personal transformation begins from within and then naturally moves outward and is displayed in our loving and caring relationships with one another. For I believe God desires to not only transform our own lives but to also transform the lives of those around us. Yet I don't believe God desires for us to impose our "Christian Values" onto others but to live out the "Christian Virtues" that grow from within. "Christian Values" and "Christian Virtues" looks, acts, and feels very different, don't you think?

Your pastor,
Ryan

SESSION ACTIONS – SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

At its September session meeting the elders voted:

- to receive Karen Nolan into membership by letter of transfer from the Pennington Presbyterian Church;
- to approve the purchase of Advent devotional books;
- to provide cash and gift cards for the pastor to use at his discretion for emergency needs;
- to purchase a new Canon copier for the church office;
- to approve the extension of the WiFi coverage to include the sanctuary and fellowship hall;
- to approve extended hours for the Saturday AA group meeting on October 28 and use of the facilities on October 4 by Womanspace.

SLACKWOOD PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

PW will meet on October 19 at 12 noon. Please bring a sandwich, and dessert will be provided.

Our Bible Study will be Lesson 2: In Community with the Living God – Hebrews 1:1-4; 12:18-24; 8:10; Exodus 3:1-7; 19:16-25 and Jeremiah 31:31-34.

On October 14, 9:30-12:30 at the Taiwanese America Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Hillsborough (Route 206) will be our Fall Gathering of PW of the New Brunswick Presbytery. Speaker will be Mphatso Nguluwe, International Peacemaker from Malawi. Mission donation will be donations of Matchbox Cars; children's underpants, sizes 3-10 for Haiti; and women's personal hygiene products for Bayard Church pantry.

PROPERTY COMMITTEE PROJECT



We have always been looking for ways to become a "green" facility. As a result, we have entered a program with the state of New Jersey to reduce our electric usage. The program is called New Jersey Direct. During October a company, Tri State Lighting, will be converting all lights around the building to LED lighting and replace one air conditioner with a more efficient one. Slackwood pays 30% of the cost and New Jersey pays the remaining 70%. This is a real win for us as we are projected to recoup our investment in 15 months! A huge savings in the long run. This is real stewardship of our resources.

FALL RUMMAGE SALE IS HERE!

Just a reminder about the rummage sale! The dates for the 2017 Fall Rummage Sale are **Friday October 13, and Saturday October 14 (set up on Oct. 11 and 12)**. The proceeds of the sale support the mission outreach of the church. Volunteers are needed in a variety of ways. Determine how you can assist in making this a successful effort:

- Save your Halo Farms bags to be used for the sale

- THE SHED IS FULL! Please hold items until the set up day, **Wednesday afternoon, October 11 until 6 pm and up to 1 pm on Thursday October 12. PLEASE BE CONSIDERATE OF THE HELPERS AND DO NOT BRING DONATED ITEMS TO THE CHURCH AFTER 1 PM.**
- Call Bill (609-651-1321) to arrange for a pickup on Wednesday or Thursday before the sale.
- Help empty the shed – **Wednesday October 11, 11:00 am** the men will begin setting up the tables and moving items into fellowship hall. Whenever you can make it after 11:00 am would be helpful. We will begin to sort "White Elephant" items, etc. until 6 pm – HELP IS NEEDED
- Help set up for the sale **Thursday October 12 beginning at 9:00 am**
- Assist in the sale **Friday October 13 9:00 – 5:00 pm and Saturday October 14 8:30 – 1:00 pm**
- Help in the cleanup – **Saturday October 14 beginning at 1:00 pm**

Thanks,
Terrie and Bill Mansmann, Co-chairs

"MESSY CHURCH" – OCTOBER 15

We will once again come together as a church family for "Messy Church" at 9:30 am on October 15. Sunday school students, adult forum attendees, parents, church members and friends will gather for fun, fellowship, messy art projects, and discussions. Our past gatherings have given us a time to share our faith, tell our stories, get to know one another better, and share in an art project or conversational time. God calls us to fellowship with one another and this time together offers us an opportunity to get to know our young people and one another better. Our new seminary intern, Katie Gardner-Jewett will lead the morning's activities. Come join us for the fun!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS – A SERVICE YOU WILL NOT WANT TO MISS

On Sunday, October 15, the Princeton Seminary Music Ambassadors will be part of the leadership of the 10:30 am service of worship. Many of you will remember the seminary touring choir that lead worship several years ago. The Music Ambassadors, under the direction of Martin Tel, are a similar group of talented musicians. You will not want to miss this service. Invite your friends and neighbors, too!

MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB

The next meeting of the Club will be Friday October 20, 2017 at 9:00 am at the church. Pancakes, camaraderie and completion of some small jobs are the order of the day. So mark your calendar for the meetings to join in the great breakfast, fellowship and work of the church!

FALL CLEAN-UP DAY – SATURDAY OCTOBER 21

A clean-up day has been scheduled for Saturday October 21, from 8:30 to 12:00. In addition to the leaves, we can clear the brush along the driveway, edge the front sidewalk, cleanup the meditation garden and other garden areas around the church. Mark the date on your calendar and plan to join in for an hour or two for some work, fun and fellowship. Hope to see you there.

SEMINARY INTERN FOR 2017-18

Slackwood Church is pleased to have Katie Garner-Jewett join us in ministry for the 2017-18 academic year as a seminary intern. She is a proud Pacific Northwest mutt, originally from Lake Oswego, Oregon, but calls Bellingham, Washington home after living there for 5 years before moving to come to Princeton Seminary. Katie graduated from Western Washington University with a degree in Human Services. She is in her middle year in seminary and is liking Jersey more and more! She is passionate about the great outdoors, good food, and social justice. She also speaks Spanish and can make a mean cup of coffee, since she used to work at Starbucks! Please introduce yourself to Katie and get to know her.

CHURCH T-SHIRTS

There are still Slackwood church t-shirts available for anyone who wants one. If you don't pick one up before the rummage sale, make sure you get one when you come to work at the sale. Both adult and youth sizes are in stock.

SHEPHERDING PROGRAM

The Board of Deacons of Slackwood Church takes seriously their call to assist the pastor in caring for the church family, as well as others in need. One way they do this is through their Shepherding Program. Each deacon, or shepherd, has a small flock of people for whom they specifically care. They want to get to know each person in their flock, and be available to pray with or for those people as well as be a resource and help for those with particular needs. If you do not know who your deacon shepherd is, check the list hanging on the bulletin board in fellowship hall or call Amelia Irmer.

You should feel comfortable calling your deacon when you have a particular need, when you need prayer, when you need someone to talk to, if you need help navigating the various committees and groups in the church, etc. They are available to listen and to show compassion. They will keep your confidence, and they will let the pastor know when there are emergencies or when a visit from him is needed.

The deacons are an important part of the pastoral care of our congregation. Deacons are people called to serve specifically because of their spiritual character, sincere compassion, and good judgment. Deacons and the

pastor visit those who are sick, shut-in, grieving, distressed, etc. Together they seek to reach out to everyone. We hope you will feel comfortable calling your deacon shepherd whenever you have a need.

BASKETBALL CLINIC

As part of the outreach ministry of Slackwood Church, Pastor Irmer will be leading a basketball clinic for young people in grades 4 through 7 on four consecutive Mondays, October 16 through November 6. This is a free program co-sponsored with Every Child Valued and the Lawrence Community Center and will be held at the community center from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. Registration forms are on the church website or you can pick one up at the church.



WELCOME KAREN NOLAN

At its regular meeting on September 20, the session received Karen Nolan into church membership by letter of transfer from the Pennington Presbyterian Church. Karen grew up in Robbinsville, NJ and graduated from Allentown High School and Trenton State College. She taught Health and PE and coached gymnastics and softball at Sharon School in Robbinsville. Presently Karen works at Rider University in the Psychology Department. Prior to that, she worked at Princeton Seminary where she met both Carol Belles and Ryan Irmer.

Karen's passions include walking in nature, gardening, scrapbooking, and spending time at the Grounds for Sculpture. She has hiked in most of the National Parks in the United States and spent a week rafting on the Grand Canyon. She loves being outside! Please introduce yourself to Karen and welcome her to the Slackwood family.

CONSECRATION SUNDAY – NOVEMBER 19

On November 19, we will celebrate Consecration Sunday at Slackwood. Preaching that day will be Dr. Shane Berg, Vice President for External Relations at Princeton Theological Seminary. At a special time during the service, each of us will be asked to consecrate, or dedicate- ourselves to our church's ministries and missions. This is a confidential and voluntary commitment made as we grow in our faith through giving. After the service we will celebrate with a luncheon. Please look for more information to be mailed to you in the upcoming weeks.

I'M ALIVE

We see each other on most Sundays, God willing. "How are you doing?" they ask. "Same" or "I am here" is my usual response. I try to smile, but I want to be honest about how I feel. There are times that I feel so overwhelmed that it's almost like I am suffocating; other times I feel so useless.

This is not who I am! Where have I disappeared to? I am not ready to give in to my aging body. My mind is sharp, at least on most days. Your smiles are warm and loving. I FEEL loved being here at Slackwood. I also feel like a child at times. I use to get things for others. When did others start getting me coffee and snacks? It's nice, don't get me wrong, but when did I lose my independence?

Here comes another one: "How are you doing today?" "I'm here" is all I can get out audibly. Who wants to listen to someone talk about all that I am feeling, even if I wanted to talk?

Oh boy, here comes the pastor's wife.

"How are you doing today?"

"I'm here," is my response.

"What does that mean?"

"You know, same ole same ole."

"Is that a good thing or bad thing?" She continues to prod.

"It is what it is. I'll take whatever the good Lord gives me."

I smile hesitantly and say, "I'm alive," and I shrug my shoulders.

She looks at me with concerned eyes, but walks away to greet someone else.

How many can relate to this scenario? What can we do as a church body, as deacons, as elders, as your church family to support you and be there for you without making you feel like a burden? As a deacon, I struggle with this. As Ryan's wife, I struggle even more. In wanting to engage with those that I only see on Sundays, I tend to divide my time with as many people as I can. This is not ideal, for how many meaningful conversations can you have with several people within 30 minutes?

TELL US. Tell your deacon, your elder, your pastor, your church family how to be a better servant of God to you. We are here to serve you, because in serving you, we serve God and there isn't anything more Holy than that. Help us to be better Disciples of Christ by helping us be better servants to you. Tell us and we will show you.

Amelia Irmer

EXPLORATIONS COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL

Explorations Community Preschool is once again in full swing! October is one of our favorite months of the year with Halloween just around the corner. This year's Trunk or Treat is scheduled for October 21 at 6pm (rain date 9/27). Please come dressed in costume (optional) and ready to hand out candy to our young friends. We're looking for the most creative trunk, best dressed, and most effort. Small prizes will be awarded! Please contact Shana if you want to participate (609) 647-4214.

Our community project for the month of October is a food collection for HomeFront's food pantry. Please drop off non-perishable foods to Explorations Monday-Friday, between the hours of 7-5 pm. We will also begin our collection for Operation Christmas Child later in the month. If you wish to participate please stop by the school office for more information.

Because Explorations is a small preschool we rely a lot on our fundraisers to help us afford extra materials and experiences for our children. Each month we offer opportunities for families to either purchase special items through a book sale (Yankee Candle, Mixed Bag, Joe Corbis), attend a special event (our Spaghetti Fundraiser), or enjoy a family dining night at a local restaurant. If you are interested please check the information board at the front of the school to see what's going on at Explorations!

Explorations is currently enrolling children ages 6 weeks-6 years into our full time program. Please share with friends and families and remember to tell them that anyone affiliated with Slackwood Presbyterian will receive a 10% discount off of tuition!

Shana Schiavo

LETTING YOUR FLOWER BLOSSOM



We always compare our worst to someone's best. But God made us all different. He didn't make one kind of flower in one color. He made different kinds of flowers in many colors. That's what we are as women, and we need to appreciate what God gave us and be happy. That's the thing: Happiness is a choice. And I think we have to be happy with OURSELVES first.

By Marie Osmond

From "Women First" magazine, February 13, 2017

SPIRITUAL MESSAGE

By Cathy Salvatore

OCCUPY THE BEST SEAT

Matthew 20:20-28

What parent does not want the best for their children? The mother of two sons of Zebedee had the same desire. They thought they could assure Jesus to drink from the same chalice, no problem and how hard could this be? Paul is clear about following Christ for those who follow, all will be well through the image of Christ. From the perspective of the material world, choosing to follow Jesus does not assure the best seats in the house.

Walking with Christ is perplexed, persecuted, and struck down but always redeemed by God who saves. Jesus holds all the power to handle it in service and love.

Even if we achieve the highest material success, we are never promised comfort, convenience, or a pain-free life. Facing all these difficult conditions of discipleship, will we drink from the chalice? What particular seat do we hope to occupy?