



The Slackwood Grapevine

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Pastor's Ponderings

An ancient Greek philosopher wisely said, "The only constant in life is change." How true that is. I think of the many changes, both predictable and unexpected, that we may experience—from new jobs to illnesses, new homes to graduations, retirements to losses. No matter what the change, we're bound to feel off balance.

The recent past has also brought significant changes to Christian churches. After being separated by the pandemic, we've returned, but perhaps not to the way things once were. No matter how hard we try to relive our former ways of being, we, as a community of faith, must discern new methods of doing ministry. Change involves three stages: ending, an in-between period of uncertainty and confusion, and a new beginning.

It seems we, at Slackwood, are in the second stage, the in-between period, on the brink of a new beginning. Who are we being called to become, and what are we being called to do? Last year, the Session adopted a new Vision Statement to guide us in our discernment: We envision glorifying and serving God by being an example to each other, the community, and the world through vibrant worship, faithful prayer, relevant study, joyful fellowship, and compassionate service.

What changes will we need to make to fulfill this vision? What opportunities for ministry lie right in front of us? How can we, both as individuals and as a community, offer our resources to respond to the changing needs of the world around us? How might our space be utilized by a local group of marginalized youth or young adults as a safe space to meet? What can we do to address the food scarcity issue in our community? How could we encourage more people to participate in spiritual growth opportunities and nurture our faith? In what ways could we reach out to our immediate neighbors at Heritage Village?

Yes, change is constant, but we believe in a God who is ever-present throughout all the seasons of life, equipping and challenging us, embracing and guiding us. Confident that together we will embrace the changes ahead and find ways to respond faithfully, I invite you to prayerfully journey with me.

May it be so!
David

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MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY OF SERVICE



Monday, January 20th we will be holding the Martin Luther King Day of Service in Fellowship Hall starting at 10:00 a.m. If you can join us, your help would be sincerely appreciated. Participants will make snack and lunch bags for the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen.

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the congregation of Slackwood Presbyterian Church has been called by the session for Sunday, January 26, 2025 immediately following the 10:30 a.m. service of worship. The meeting is called to elect elders, deacons and members of the congregation nominating committee, and to approve the terms of call of the pastor.

ORDINATION/INSTALLATION

During the 10:30 a.m. service of worship on Sunday, February 2, those officers elected at the congregation meeting will be ordained and/or installed to office. Plan to come to worship and thank the new officers for stepping up and serving in leadership.

2025 OFFERING ENVELOPES

Sets of offering envelopes have been distributed, and a few remain in the rear of the sanctuary. Be sure to pick yours up even if you do not use them on a regular basis. 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.

2025 PER CAPITA FEE

The Presbytery set the Per Capita fee for 2025 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 meets following worship on the second Sunday of each month 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.

The new year will bring some major improvements to the church property. First, we are going to install a solar array on the roof of the Christian Education wing of the church. We will own the system, and through grants and refunds, it will pay for itself in 5 to 6 years! Our electric needs will be provided for many years to come! This project should be completed by the spring. Second, we are going to refinish the church parking lot. It was last done in 1991, and it is time for it to be resurfaced again. This will happen sometime in April. Finally, we are working on a project to run electricity and internet out to the shed at the rear of the property. Our goal is to complete this project before the parking lot is completed.



TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION GROUP

On Sunday, December 8, the group held a brief prayer service in front of the church to commemorate the anniversary of the United Nation's General Assembly [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR). "This landmark document enshrines the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." (United Nations website)

At 1pm on Saturday, February 22, the group will show the movie *Origin* in Fellowship Hall. It is a movie about "the unspoken system that has shaped America and chronicles how lives today are defined by a hierarchy of human divisions." Following the movie, there will be time for discussion. Light snacks will be provided. Look for a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall. All are welcome.

Our next meeting will be Thursday, February 13 at 7:00 via Zoom. Look for a link in the weekly announcements or contact Kate Moore for information.

BEE KIND

Penny Baumann

After a wonderful holiday season and hopes for a peaceful New Year, it seems within hours of celebrating, our hopes were dashed by unspeakable tragedies. These first two weeks of 2025 have already brought sadness and disappointment to so many, and the catastrophic wildfires continuing to ravage parts of California promise to scar our memories for many years to come. I am so appreciative to the people in my life who have offered up their kindness just to tell me they are thinking of my Los Angeles son who is struggling right now, waiting for the danger to pass but living in uncertainty every day. It's been a horrible week as we wait to hear about more evacuations, more devastation, increasing health and breathing problems, loss of life and precious property, and what's to become of what is left. And every once in

a while, buried amongst all the sorrow, we hear a story of human kindness or God's great mercy that sheds a glimmer of light and makes us start to hope once again – you know, the man whose dog literally rose out of the ashes after disappearing while they were evacuating, the elderly woman who found her family album in the ruins of her house, the little home that remained untouched by embers amid acres of smoldering rubble, the firefighter who lost his own home but fights every day to save others. These are the stories I hold onto. The bigger picture is just too hard to grasp. I need to know that kindness will prevail and sorrows will be calmed by people much better than myself who can be there for those who are suffering.

Just wanted to share this little story below. Although it has nothing to do with wildfire and human kindness, it made me think about the ways God provides what we need when we need it, even for the tiny, little bee.

My dad has bees. Today I went to his house and he showed me all of the honey he had gotten from the hives. He took the lid off of a 5 gallon bucket full of honey and on top of the honey there were 3 little bees, struggling. They were covered in sticky honey and drowning. I asked him if we could help them and he said he was sure they wouldn't survive. Casualties of honey collection I suppose.



I asked him again if we could at least get them out and kill them quickly, after all he was the one who taught me to put a suffering animal (or bug) out of its misery. He finally conceded and scooped the bees out of the bucket. He put them in an empty Chobani yogurt container and put the plastic container outside. Because he had disrupted the hive with the earlier honey collection, there were bees flying all over outside.



We put the 3 little bees in the container on a bench and left them to their fate. My dad called me out a little while later to show me what was happening. These three little bees were surrounded by all of their sisters (all of the bees are females) and they were cleaning the sticky nearly dead bees, helping them to get all of the honey off of their bodies. We came back a short time later and there was only one little bee left in the container. She was still being tended to by her sisters.

When it was time for me to leave we checked one last time and all three of the bees had been cleaned off enough to fly away and the container was empty.

Those three little bees lived because they were surrounded by family and friends who would not give up on them, family and friends who refused to let them drown in their own stickiness and resolved to help until the last little bee could be set free.

We could all learn a thing or two from these bees.

-Unknown

Please check our calendar online for upcoming meetings and events:

<http://www.slackwoodchurch.org/event-calendar.html>