The Slackwood Grapevine

Slackwood Presbyterian Church
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December 2025

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43: 18,19

As I read these words, standing on the threshold of a new year, I'm reminded that our past—whether marked by joy, regret, or uncertainty — does not limit what God can do in our lives today. God's invitation is to let go of what's behind and open our hearts to the newness already springing forth.

What are we holding onto from yesterday? Is it disappointment, nostalgia, or fear of change? We are invited to release those things, trusting that God's plans for us are greater than our history.

God's new work is already unfolding in our lives. It could be a new opportunity, a restored relationship, or a renewed sense of purpose. We should stay alert and receptive, praying for God's guidance to recognize what is developing — even if it's just a faint sign of hope.

There are areas of our lives that may feel like a wilderness — confusing, dry, or lonely. Yet God promises to make a way forward and bring rivers to those deserts. We can trust that God is present, working in the places that seem most challenging.

I encourage you to actively participate in the new work God is doing in and through you rather than just watching life go by. In the coming year, pause to reflect, observe, listen, and respond with a 'yes" to God's invitation.

May it be so!

Pastor David

Contact Info: Cell: 732.547.3480. Email: dfbsbv@gmail.com

Hope you will join us for worship on Sunday, January 4, 2026. During the service, we will share this year's "Star Words." If you are unable to join us that Sunday, please contact me, and I will get a word to you.

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

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION

Each January the session submits to the congregation an annual written report highlighting the work and ministry of the church. If you chair a committee or moderate a group in the church, or serve as a treasurer you need to submit a report covering 2025 to the clerk of session no later than Monday, January 12. If you have any questions at all, contact the clerk.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the congregation of Slackwood Presbyterian Church has been called by the session for Sunday, January 25, 2026 immediately following the morning service of worship. The meeting is called to elect members of the Session, the Board of Deacons, and the 2026 officer nominating committee, as well as to approve the terms of call for the pastor, and to conduct any other business set by the session.

PROPERTY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

The next meeting of the committee will take place via Zoom on Sunday January 11, 2026. Oh My!! We will be discussing items that can be completed over the winter. If you have any suggestions for the committee to discuss, contact Bill Mansmann at 609-651-1321 or feel free to attend the meeting and share your thoughts.

2026 OFFERING ENVELOPES

For people who wanted offering envelopes for 2026, they have been created and are on the window sill at the rear of the 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.

2026 PER CAPITA FEE

The 2026 Per Capita fee is established by the Presbytery of the Coastlands, and will be $42.00 per member. As per the Presbyterian Church,

> "*Per capita is an opportunity for all members to participate equally, responsibly, and interdependently by sharing the cost of coordination and evaluation of mission;…*

The Per Capita fee supports 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 and this reduces funds available for other needs within Slackwood Church.

TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND RECONCILIATION GROUP

On December 10th between 7-9pm, approximately 20 people from the church and the community joined in observance of Human Rights Day. The group organized an information session about three local outreach programs; HiTops, Younity, and Every Child Valued. Presenters from each organization spoke about who they are and what they offer. After the information portion, those who were willing decorated and put together approximately 100 “holiday bags” for the youth at Every Child Valued and Explorations Preschool. Following the community service project was a brief candlelight prayer service drawing attention and praying for the many people who are suffering from injustices around the world.

The next meeting of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation will be held via Zoom on January 8th. All are welcome to participate. The link is posted in the announcements the Sunday before the meeting.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Worship Committee is happy to report that our sound system upgrade project has been completed and is up and running. The new system has many special features that should greatly improve the quality of our livestream. Please be patient as we learn to operate this new equipment. Thank you to all who supported our fundraising efforts and to those involved in making sure those at home can worship with their friends and family in the sanctuary.

December 28th will be an informal “Service Around the Table” held in Fellowship Hall with a light breakfast.

GIFT TO THE CHURCH

The session is pleased to report that the Estate of Marilyn Stebbins has gifted the church with $20,000 with the request that half of that amount be used for the sound and livestream system upgrade. Marilyn was a faithful viewer of online worship at Slackwood each week. Her generosity topped off all the contributions that were received for the upgrade. Each donation is gratefully appreciated.

FROM THE FAMILY OF MARILYN STEBBINS

THANK YOU! A HUGE thank you to everyone at Slackwood church that assisted in the November 29th memorial service and celebration of Marilyn Stebbins. We are so grateful and touched by all that was done to make the service such a wonderful celebration. We laughed, cried, reminisced, shared pictures and stories of 90 years of Marilyn's life.

Special thanks to Robin Garzoni (live stream), Penny Baumann, Carol Belles, and David Bowman for assistance before, during and after the service. Thanks to the Deacons for putting together a delish appetizer/snack table for all to enjoy! We wish everyone a joyous Christmas and healthy Happy 2026!

The family of Marilyn Stebbins –

Shelley, Scott, Melanie and grandchildren Conrad, Colby, Hannah and Julia Stebbins

CHRISTMAS CAROL QUIZ

I was recently going through my folder of articles that readers send to me as suggested additions for our newsletter to find something a little different to put in this month and I found this. It was sent to me 15 years ago and I want to share it with you – took me long enough, right? Take a moment away from the busy preparations for the holiday and see if you can figure out these Christmas carols by the description provided.

1. From dark 'til dawn, soundless and sanctimonious
2. Celestial messengers from splendid empires
3. In a distant bovine diner
4. Universal elation
5. Ornament the enclosure with large sprigs of berry-bearing evergreen
6. O miniature Nazarene village
7. May Jehovah grant unto you hilarious males retirement
8. Those of you who are true, come here!
9. Are you detecting the same aural sensations as I am?
10. The diminutive male of less than adult age who plays a percussion instrument
11. Primary Yuletide
12. Heavenly cherubs announcing in song – listen!
13. Reigning monarchs of the Far East
14. Proclaim it to the hills.

I have the answers and if you really need help, just shoot me an email (baumannp@aol.com) and I'll solve the mystery for you.

Unto us a child is born
Unto us a Son is given
Isaiah 9:6