The Slackwood Grapevine

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July 2026

Pastor's Ponderings
Summer 2026

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south[a] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Acts 8: 26-31

In Acts 8, Philip meets an Ethiopian official on a wilderness road. The traveler is reading Isaiah and wondering what it means. Philip does not begin with a sales pitch or a judgment. He begins with a question: "Do you understand what you are reading?" The traveler replies, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" Then he invites Philip to get in and sit beside him.

That small invitation changed everything. The questions were still real, and the road was still dusty, but now no one was traveling alone.

At Slackwood Presbyterian Church, we know that many people are traveling their own wilderness roads. Some are carrying questions about faith, grief, family, justice, identity, hope, or the future. Some have been away from church for years. Some are curious but cautious. Some simply wonder whether there is a community where they can be known, welcomed, and loved as they are.

One of the simplest and most faithful things we can do is extend an invitation. Not a pressured invitation, but one that says, "There is room for you here." Come to worship. Come to fellowship hour. Come to a Bible study, to the Community fair. Offer a meal, a conversation, or simply a seat beside you.

God's welcome is wide, Christ's table is generous, and the Spirit is already at work in people's lives long before we arrive. So this summer, pay attention for your own wilderness-road moment. Who is asking questions? Who seems lonely? Who has said, "I've been meaning to find a church," or "I don't know where I belong"?

The invitation might be as ordinary as a text message: "I'm going to worship Sunday and would love to sit with you." It might be meeting someone in the parking lot so they don't have to walk in alone. It might be saying, "Our church is not perfect, but we are trying to follow Jesus: We embrace God, extend welcome, and celebrate all."

Philip didn't need every answer before he climbed into the chariot. He only had to come alongside, listen, and share the good news he knew. That is our calling, too. We invite people because faith is a journey best traveled together.

May we, as Slackwood Presbyterian Church, be a community where invitations are offered gently, welcome is practiced sincerely, and no one has to travel the road alone. Who might God be inviting you to sit beside?

May you find blessings in your day,

David

I can be reached at 732.547.3480 or at dfbsbv@gmail.com

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

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

At recent session meetings, the following people were received into membership:

Linda Johnson

Linda is a Lawrence Township resident who retired in 2011 after a career in nursing. She worked first at Capital Health and then with the State of New Jersey caring for teenagers dealing with emotional problems. Linda has one son, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild. After visiting a number of churches, Linda found a family and home at Slackwood.

Michael Vallio

Michael (also called Mike or Mickey) was born in Monmouth County, NJ. Coming from a military family, he was raised in Montana, upstate NY, and Fort Dix. Later, he lived in Phoenix for 18 years. Michael was confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church but grew non-observant. He works approving bids and contracts for Blum, a technology company. He has 3 siblings, and many nieces and nephews who are all very beloved. Michael and David Galiardo have been life partners approaching 6 years and plan to marry on July 18th in Slackwood church.

David Galiardo

David (also called Dave or Mr. G) was born in Newark, NJ. He was mostly raised in Monmouth County and was confirmed into the Dutch Reformed Church. "Mr. G" taught for many years at Fortis Institute prior to joining Penn Medicine at Princeton Medical Center. David has a large family and several near life-long friends, all of whom are extremely important to him. He and Michael Vallio have been together for 5+ years and will marry on July 18th at Slackwood Presbyterian.

Be sure to welcome Linda, Michael and David into our church family and get to know each of them.

COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

Our annual community festival is being held on August 15th with a rain date planned for August 22nd. The festival continues to be one of our biggest events of the year but it is a lot of work for many people in order for it to be the success it has always been. We need your help with whatever you are willing to do, from set-up to clean-up and many jobs in-between. The sign-up sheet is in fellowship hall, and if you have any questions you can ask Beth Clark.

Please spread the word to families, neighbors, and friends, young and old, who are interested and want to have fun as the day is full of games, prizes, activities, treats, and good times for everyone, all held on our back lawn with convenient parking in our lot.

PROPERTY AND FINANCE

The Committee met on Sunday, June 14 at church following worship with five members and Rev. Bowman participating.

The monthly “Pancake Breakfast” met on June 19 but will not meet during the summer months, so the next breakfast will be on Friday, September 18 beginning at 8:30 am.

There was discussion concerning the purchase of a new computer and updated software for the church. Our current computer runs on Windows 7 that is no longer supported. The Power Church program is 15 years old. It is time to upgrade our system with a computer that runs on Windows 11 and the Power Church program version 11.0. We plan to be a part of a technology grant request from the Presbytery.

We are also working on having the floors in the CE wing and Fellowship cleaned and refinished this summer.

CHURCH FINANCES

During this time of church services that are online/outside/inside, we continue to be blessed with members who know how important their church financial commitment is. Thanks to everyone who has continued with financial support through mail, in person and online. We are generally in sound financial shape after five months of the current fiscal year. But…….Please keep up the great support through the summer months! We still have the normal expenses, and bills will need to be paid. So, plan on continuing to support the work of your church even though you may not be around each Sunday. Have a wonderful summer.

CALLING ALL GARDENERS

If you enjoy being outside to do gardening, and like seeing the results of your efforts, your help is needed at your church. We have numerous garden areas around the church property that need tending to from time to time. We are in good shape now but those pesky weeds often make a comeback. So, if you are so inclined, stop by and clean any area around the church of unwanted weeds. This keeps our church grounds looking cared for!