The Slackwood Grapevine

Slackwood Presbyterian Church
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November 2025

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

"How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven."
(Phillips Brooks, "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

These words from the beloved Christmas carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," resonate deeply with us in a world filled with constant noise, especially during the holiday season. Too often, this noise distracts us from the heart of our celebrations—the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In this hymn, the repetition of "silently" emphasizes the quiet, almost invisible arrival of Christ into the world. There were no trumpet blasts, no royal declarations—only the cry of a newborn in a humble stable. This silence sharply contrasts with the often loud and showy nature of human pomp and circumstance. Are you able to step away from the noise to find the "wondrous gift"? Where in your Christmas preparations can you find the quiet to rediscover the hopeful joy of Christ's birth?

Phillips Brooks, who wrote the hymn's lyrics, draws a parallel between the silent coming of Christ and how God works in human hearts. Just as Christ entered the world quietly, so does he enter our lives—not with fanfare, but with the gentle knock of grace upon our hearts' door. My prayer for each of you this Christmas season is that you will experience the "wondrous gift," silently given, in ways that encourage and strengthen your faith and bring you lasting peace. May it fill your hearts with hope and joy and affirm your belovedness.

Wishing you blessings this Advent and Christmas Season and into the year ahead!

Merry Christmas,
Pastor David and Richard

Contact information: Cell: 732-547-3480; Email: dfbsbv@gmail.com

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

The past few weeks have been difficult for my family and me after the sudden death of my sister, Marcia Toms. Your cards, text messages, emails, calls, and especially your prayers have provided me with great comfort and encouraged me to continue through this grief; you have illuminated Christ's light for me. The beautiful peace lily plant you sent to her funeral, and the plant sent to my home by the Deacons, were meaningful reminders of your compassionate care and our hope for life beyond this earthly one.

Thank you for being a blessing in my life,

Pastor David

ADVENT SOCIAL

This year's Advent Social will be on Friday, Dec. 5 at 5:30pm at the (church manse) home of Syd Ryon. Please sign up to attend on the sheet in fellowship hall so Syd knows how many to expect. Plan to bring a covered dish (appetizer, entrée, side or dessert); beverages will be provided. Also, please bring a wrapped gift costing no more than $10, and feel free not to be too serious in what you bring.

ADVENT STUDY

An Advent Study will be held on Thursdays, December 4, 11 and 18 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom and led by Pastor Bowman. The book "Voices of Advent" by Matthew Skinner will be used. There is a sign-up sheet in fellowship hall so sufficient books can be ordered.

ANNUAL REPORT

Each year the session submits to the congregation an annual written report covering the mission and ministries of the church for a specific calendar year. Everyone who chairs a committee, serves as a treasurer, or moderates a group of the church needs to submit a written report covering 2025. Reports this year are due to the Clerk no later than January 12, 2026. If your report is ready before the 12th, feel free to submit it.

PROPERTY & FINANCE

The committee continues to do its work on the maintenance and care of our facility. As the weather turns toward winter and the grass stops growing, many thanks to all who faithfully maintained the church lawns!

The next meeting of the committee will take place following worship on Sunday December 14, 2025. 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

People who utilized Offering envelopes for 2025 or made a commitment for 2026, will have a set of envelopes created for 2026. This will allow for the creation of a record so that the quarterly reports can be generated. Envelopes will be available for pick-up on Sunday, December 14, 2025. 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. Envelope sets not picked up by January 14, 2026, will be delivered or mailed after that date.

2025 PER CAPITA FEE

The 2025 Per Capita fee is established by the Presbytery of the Coastlands, and will be $42 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.

EQUIPMENT FOR THE DISABLED

If you or someone you know may be in need of a wheelchair, crutches, a cane, portable toilet or a walker, we have them available for use. Also, we have a small scooter that we have already loaned out a couple of times. Speak to anyone on the Property Committee to gain access to what you may need.

WORSHIP

Technology Update

Work on our sound system and live-streaming update has begun! The worship committee would like to send a sincere thank you to everyone who contributed to this much needed improvement. Training for the new system will start this week and the whole process is expected to be much easier. Please reach out to Kate, Robin, or Beth if you are interested in being trained.

Advent

The Advent season begins next week. The Worship Committee would like to once again display nativities in the sanctuary. If you would like to share your nativity for the season, please bring it in starting on Sunday, November 30th. Fill out a card to let us know who is displaying it and add any other details you would like to share about it.

Blue Christmas

Although the upcoming season is joyous for many of us, there are those who are dealing with grief and sadness during the holiday season. There will be a special Blue Christmas service held at 7pm on December 21. The service is open to all who would like to come.

Christmas Eve Service

Our Christmas Eve service this year will be held at 8pm on Wednesday, December 24 and will also be live-streamed if you are unable to attend in person. We hope you will join us in celebration that night.

The Sunday service on December 28 will be an informal "Service Around the Table" held in Fellowship Hall. For more information, please see Carol or Kate.

If you are interested in participating in our worship service as a liturgist, usher, or choir member, please let Carol Belles, Kate Moore, or Shelley Zuckerman know and we will happily help you make that happen.

The Worship Committee usually meets after worship on the 4th Sunday of the month in the sanctuary. All are welcome to attend.

Kate Moore

TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND RECONCILIATION

The Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation group usually meets on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 on Zoom and gathers for special events throughout the year.

On Wednesday, December 10, 2025, The Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Group will be observing World Human Rights Day with a free community gathering from 7-8:30pm. There will be brief presentations from Younity (formerly Woman's Space), HiTops, and Every Child Valued. After the presentations we will be participating in a service activity that will benefit the children in our area. All are welcome to attend.

The group will be reading Jeanine Cummins book entitled American Dirt. If you requested a copy of the book, you will be receiving your copy soon. The committee has set the date of March 1, 2026 to hold our discussion. A zoom option will be available for those who are away. We hope you will consider joining us for the discussion, even if you just want to listen.

Due to the upcoming Advent Study our next group meeting will be Thursday, January 8, 2026 via Zoom. All are welcome to attend. The link can be found in the announcements the week of the meeting.

Kate Moore

BE THE LIGHT

Update

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. -Matthew 5:16

The act of giving thanks is tied directly to being a participant in God's "kingdom of light." As we begin to wind down our calendar year, we are wrapping up our "Be The Light" stewardship campaign. There is still an opportunity to return your pledge card. If you would like a pledge card or have questions, please let me know.

Thank you for sharing your time, talents, and treasures with Slackwood. Your support allows us to continue to do God's work within our congregation and in the wider community.

During these financially difficult times, please remember that there are many ways to support Slackwood outside of monetary offerings. We have been blessed at Slackwood with service-minded worshipers who continually give. Whether you participate on a committee, sing in the choir, volunteer to teach, donate items, greet people, agree to be a liturgist, mow the lawn, provide fellowship snacks, fix the equipment, attend an activity, provide pulpit supply, reach out to others, pray for those in need, keep the books, or make and clean up the coffee each week…you are appreciated for all you do.

Kate Moore
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