



# Spreading Branches

## The Newsletter of Lansdale Presbyterian Church

450 Oak Park Road

[www.lansdalepres.org](http://www.lansdalepres.org)

(215) 368-1119

*"I am the Vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me bears much fruit..." John 15:5*

January 2023

### Simple Trust & Straight Paths

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Here are a couple of verses from Proverbs that are worth considering as we step into 2023.

*"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6*

Take a few moments to think through these profound words.

In the Bible, *wisdom* is saying or doing the right thing in the right way at the right time. It's not cleverness. It's not intellectual superiority or being ranked an academic genius.

As Christians – as those who have put their trust in Jesus Christ – we have his Spirit living in us. Jesus says that that Spirit is another helper/counsellor/advocate. One who walks alongside us in life. (See John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). In that sense, he makes us wise.

The idea of dependence upon something or someone is carried in the words "trust" and also in "lean". We all exercise faith in something – many of you are currently reading this article sitting down. You are leaning, putting your whole weight, effectively exercising faith in the seat under you. For some of us, especially after Christmas, that might be a bigger test of faith than others! But that's the sense of the trust that's being talked about here. Where we are completely entrusting all of who we are to the Lord.

Sometimes we hear people say "I wish I had your faith" as though we've got some sort of special "faith" gene or ability, that God somehow will reward. But faith in the Bible's not like that. Faith in the Bible is all to do with the one in whom we trust, not the one doing the trusting. Not the quality of our faith that's the issue – but the quality of the one in whom we put our trust that matters.

Here we are simply to trust in the LORD. Whenever you see it printed that way – it signifies Yahweh. That's the special family name God tells his people they can call him (Exodus 3:14). It reminds people that he is the promise keeping, rescuing God. And we know that when we consider the story of the Bible, we see that he is the God who has shown himself to be true through history. Ultimately he's proven he's worth trusting through the risen Jesus. This side of the events of the Cross, when we entrust our lives to the Lord – he promises that the Holy Spirit – that's the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead; who brought life about in the first place, and now brings new life to those who are in Christ – that Spirit lives in us.

So we are to trust in him. Completely. With the full weight of our life. Every part of it. Which makes sense given that he knows how we're made and how we work in the first place. "In all your ways" includes the things that matter most to us in life: family, relationships, our ethics, our money, sex and sexuality. Everything. All that really matters, and the things that seem incidental, but make up our character just as much as everything else – everything comes under the umbrella of his way to live. Everything given over to him. That's what it means to "acknowledge" him.

By contrast – not trusting and acknowledging the Lord means we lean instead on our own understanding, apart from God. That, in the Bible is folly, yet functionally it's often how we operate. Think of who or what you listen to at the start of the day. Is it God's word, or is it the latest updates on Instagram, or on our news App?

Our personal understanding of life is incomplete. It's arrogance or folly to think otherwise. This Proverb reminds us that God knows better than we do.

Just to clarify when we are told to not lean on our own understanding, it does NOT mean that we do not use our minds. Christianity is not about throwing out brain in the trash.

But it does mean prioritizing and involving the Lord Jesus Christ – in the decisions we make, in our character development (we're never too old to change), and in our daily experiences of life. We need God's help in working out how to navigate this broken world, individually and as a church family.

The encouragement here is that when we do that – "he will make straight your paths." The sense here God will make our ways level – not plain sailing, or smooth or easy, but life will ultimately work when we trust in him. How do we know this is true?

Because that phrase – "he will make straight your paths" – comes up again in the Bible several times. For example in Isaiah 40:3, Isaiah tells of a prophet who will announce the way of the Lord – who will "make straight" the way for his arrival. Fast forward 700 years, and we learn he is talking about John the Baptist – who makes straight the way for the Lord Jesus.

All the gospel writers pick up on this. This is Matthew's take on it.

"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"*

Matthew 3:1-3

God has blazed the trail for us. He has set a course for life for us to follow. We know that it works because Jesus has gone ahead of us. Which means that when we acknowledge Him, trust in him – put the full weight of our lives on him – he will make our ways straight. We may not see it this side of the grave even, but we know they will ultimately work out. The death and resurrection of Jesus prove that's the case.

That's the good news of Christianity.

As we begin 2023 – where does our trust lie? Is it in America, politics, the government, church, friends, education, your understanding or outlook on life? They won't work. Every one of them will fail you at some level. The assertion here is that those who just trust in the Lord will be walking on hallowed ground, because we are walking in Jesus' footsteps. His values and ways shape our lives.

So as you step in to 2023, thank the Lord that though life is constantly on the move (and the changes we've seen in this last year take our breath away) that, yesterday, today, forever – he is the same. He never changes. Thank him that his Spirit is with you now. And pray that each of us would truly listen to *him*. That we would trust in him alone. Let's ask for his wisdom to understand his word, and strength and grace to obey him in the year ahead for Jesus' sake.

With continued love and prayers,

Pastor Chris



## Seniors Living in Christ (SLIC) Christmas Lunch

On December 15th, thirteen seniors braved the rainy weather to gather in the LPC café for their traditional Christmas lunch. SLIC provided the ham (thanks for cooking it, Phyllis!) and everyone contributed to the delicious meal of pineapple stuffing, scalloped potatoes, broccoli casserole, cole slaw, rolls, pie, and ice cream. It was good to gather to enjoy a delicious meal, fellowship with one another, laugh together, and exchange Pollyanna's under the Christmas tree.

SLIC will not be meeting for the next few months. Watch for details on their traditional kick-off event in the spring, ***"Everybody's Birthday"***. There will be a planning meeting during the break to plan next year's events. All are welcome to attend with ideas to share. Look for an announcement in the bulletin.



# MOMS TOGETHER

*Welcoming moms with  
children from birth through  
elementary school age.*

**MEETS**  
**Monday, Jan. 9**  
**7PM | The Commons**



**SIGN MAKING EVENT**  
**Friday, Jan. 20**  
**6:30PM | The Commons**

## Year End Giving Statements

The 2022 statements will be available early in January for your review and tax purposes. Please review your statements right away. If you have any questions or find discrepancies, please direct your questions to:

Bob Wunderlich, Treasurer, or  
Amber Etherton, Bookkeeper.

Offering Envelopes are the method the Deacons have for keeping records of your gifts and tithes. Each year you receive a statement for your tax purposes (acceptable by the IRS) from the records kept from your envelope giving.

If you would like envelopes and do not have them, please contact

Amber Etherton  
Amber@lansdalepres.org  
# (215) 368-1119, ext. 21

If you haven't received your offering envelopes for 2023, check your mailbox in the office (if you currently have one) or the table in the church lobby.

## SAVE THE DATE

**Sunday, February 5, 2023**

All Church Lunch following the  
10:30 am Worship Service

Congregational meeting following  
the lunch

No evening groups or meetings

*Watch the Sunday bulletin for details.*





## NEWCOMERS!

*Get to know the  
pastors over lunch!*

**Sunday, Jan. 8**

**12:15 PM | The Gym**

## Annual Reports 2022

Annual reports for January -  
December 2022 are due to Lori  
Davis no later than

**Sunday, January 15, 2023.**

This will allow time to print and  
have them available to the  
congregation the week prior to the  
congregational meeting scheduled  
for Sunday,  
February 5, 2023.

## Through the Bible 2023

reading guides are now  
available!

Pick one up in the  
church lobby.

## Winter Weather Alert System

The church has an automated system to contact members and friends about weather related schedule changes. *There are two ways to sign up:*

1. Simply text the word: **snow** to (215) 631-3144. You will receive a link to provide your name, email, and mobile number.
2. Sign up on your connection card - just write the words: Weather Alert and make sure your name, email, and mobile number are on the card. You will automatically receive text and email alerts with the relevant details for any weather-related schedule changes.

*Note: If you signed up last year, you do not need to sign up again!*

## Cancellations

In case of inclement weather and there is question as to whether services will be cancelled or modified, announcements will be sent by text and email, (see above for sign up information) OR you can call the church at #(215) 368-1119 and listen for updates.

## FOOD FROM THE HEART

### Highlights from January's dinner:

Cooks: Tom & Chris Greene

Speaker: Dan McBride, A Charlie Brown Christmas

Luke 2:8-14

Menu: Tossed salad, roll/butter, shepherd's pie, chocolate cake

Guests served: 40

### This month's dinner: January 29<sup>th</sup> ~ Join us at 1:00 pm

Help can always be used in the kitchen, serving our guests, cleaning up and sitting and fellowshiping with our guests.

Questions? See Rob Hand or Joy H.



**Tuesday, Jan. 31**  
**7PM**

IN PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION  
**Service of Prayer and Preparation**



# Hey Kids!

4 YEARS - 5<sup>th</sup> GRADE

A fun night of games,  
learning about Jesus  
and dinner!



Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup> | 5:30 - 7:30PM

**INVITE YOUR FRIENDS!** Postcards are in the lobby!

**SANCTITY OF HUMAN**  
*Life*  
**SUNDAY** January 22, 2023

Grace Changes Everything

**NorthCare**  
WOMEN'S CLINIC

[www.northcarecommunity.org](http://www.northcarecommunity.org)

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in January 2023 is the **FIRST** one in 50 years that abortion is not legal everywhere.

# January

- 1 No Sunday School  
10:30 am Worship Service \*  
- Rev. Chris Kennedy preaching; Communion
- 3 6:30-8:15pm ESL Classes \*
- 4 6:00 am Men's morning group \*  
6:30 pm Choir rehearsal \*  
7:30 pm Missions Committee meeting
- 5 7:00 pm Women's Bible study online \*  
7:00 pm Session meeting
- 6 10:30 am Community Group \*
- 8 8:00 am Band Rehearsal \*  
9:15 am Sunday School for all ages \*  
10:30 am Worship Service \*  
- Rev. Chris Kennedy preaching  
- Deacons' Report/Offering  
12:15 pm Pastor's Lunch  
5:00 pm Community group online resumes \*  
5:30 pm Youth Group \*  
5:30 pm Community Group(library)resumes\*
- 9 7:00 pm Moms Together
- 10 7:00 pm Women's Ministry committee mtg.
- 11 9:15 am Women's Bible study \*
- 12 6:00 pm Young Adult Book Discussion
- 15 Deadline for Annual Reports  
10:30 am Worship Service \*  
- Rev. Chris Kennedy preaching  
5:30 pm Kingdom Kids  
5:30 pm Community Group (NW) resumes \*
- 16 7:00 pm Full Board of Deacons meeting  
- Mercy Committee meeting
- 19 7:00 pm Women's Bible study in person  
7:00 pm Session meeting
- 20 6:30 pm Moms Together Sign Making
- 22 10:30 am Worship Service \*  
- Rev. Chris Kennedy preaching  
- Sanctity of Human Life Sunday
- 23 7:00 pm Elders' wives meeting
- 24 7:00 pm Finance Committee meeting
- 25 7:00 pm Moms Together Committee mtg.
- 29 10:30 am Worship Service \*  
- Rev. Brian Hand preaching  
1:00 pm Food From the Heart Dinner
- 31 7:00 pm Service of Prayer & Preparation

\*Weekly