

Spreading Branches

The Newsletter of Lansdale Presbyterian Church

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

February 2023

"Keep on running..."

At this time of year, keeping going as a Christian can be difficult. The holidays are done, family and friends are back home, and the days are still short and dark. We're easily discouraged at the best of times, how much more when all that we have to look forward to tomorrow, is much the same as today? Couple that with the truth that following Jesus is becoming increasingly difficult in our society. It's enough to wear us down.

At times like that, I find myself thinking about Hebrews 12:1-3:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

These are familiar words to many of us, but I have found them to be a great personal help through my Christian life. Two big ideas:

Consider who has already run the race.

In these verses the writer encourages his readers to run the race of life, mindful of those who have gone before them in the faith. Hebrews 11 is sometimes referred to as the "Great roll call of faith." (Described as the "great cloud of witnesses.") The chapter recounts names and people who have kept going in their trust in the Lord, all the way through their lives. The implication being that if *they* could do it, so can we.

A guy I know ran the Dublin marathon a few years ago. He'd reached the 25 mile mark and even though he has just over a mile to go, he was ready to stop and give up. It was at this point that he saw a spectator at the side of the road wearing their "I've just completed the Dublin marathon T-shirt". Among the many things that went through his mind, the overriding conclusion was this: "Well if they can do it, I can do it too!" He was considering who had already run the race. And the encouragement here is run the race, and to keep on running – to persevere. Not quit. Why were the great cloud of witnesses able to finish their race? Because the Lord was at work in them. And the Lord is at work in you too, by His Spirit. They could run the race, because their focus wasn't on them, it was on Jesus Christ. So, we're encouraged to fix our focus, not on ourselves, but on Jesus Christ.

Which brings us to the second big idea.

Consider who has already won the race.

We are told in verse 2 that the supreme competitor in the race of life itself is Jesus himself. What is more, he is "the pioneer and perfecter of faith." He makes faith in God possible, having blazed the trail for all who would come after. The writer describes how Jesus scorns the shame of an ignominious execution on a cross, for the ultimate joy that was set before him. Jesus kept his eyes on the ultimate prize. We keep our eyes fixed on him. He rules. That's why the writer says, "He sat down" – he's in the place of ultimate authority. The writer says that when we are tempted to give

up, we are to consider this Jesus. He endured the hostility and opposition of sinners. Looking at the Lord Jesus' perseverance keeps us going.

The writer has already explained part of what keeping our focus on Jesus will involve. It means that with God's help, we eliminate everything that would prevent us from persevering in our following of Jesus.

My friend who ran the Dublin marathon told me that before the race starts, participants are wearing old PJs, or sweatpants, or even trash sacks, all to stay warm. But once the race begins, all the things that get in the way of running the race are removed.

So here, we are told to 'last aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely.'

Some of the "every weight(s)" may not necessarily be bad in themselves, but they stop us from running the race most effectively. For example, it could be a friendship that isn't wrong per se, but is it the best in helping us run the race? Maybe it's a hobby, or a past-time that is harmless enough, but wastes too much of our time. It might even be ways in which we serve in the church family. One of the greatest hindrances to perseverance in following Jesus is that we do too many good things, that others would be far better doing. Are you close to giving up because you are just too busy? Do you feel you are spread too thin? Pray that the Lord would give us the discernment to distinguish what we might effectively stop doing at LPC, so that we might be *most* effective for Jesus' sake. Pray we lay aside what is *good* for what is *best*.

Similarly, there is a strong exhortation here to get rid of the "sin which clings so closely." The idea here is that our sin is messy and sticky. It clings to us. Like a giant spider's web, it entraps us, unless we lay it aside. Where might you need to confess afresh to the Lord sin that persistently sticks? You know those areas. The Lord knows them too – better than anyone.

The great encouragement here is that it *can* be laid aside – because we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has already run the race, and who has already won the race. As we look back over the past year at our congregational meeting and think about how the Lord is leading us in 2023, pray that our focus is wholly on him.

With continued love and prayers,

Pastor Chris

Special Schedule Sunday – February 5th

9:15 am Sunday School for all ages

10:30 am Morning Worship Service
- New member Recognition
- Baptisms
- Communion

Following the service:

- All Church Lunch in the gym
Please bring a main dish, salad/side, or dessert to share if you are able
- Congregational meeting after the lunch

5:30 pm Youth Group Missions Trip meeting at the church
7:00 pm Social follows at Marilyn R.'s and Rachel Hart's

No community groups meeting

LANSDALE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

MISSIONS CONFERENCE

WITH
YANNICK & ERIN IMBERT

Sunday, March 5, 2023

- 9:15 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL for grade 6 - adult
10:30 AM WORSHIP SERVICE with Yannick Imbert preaching
5-7:30 PM DINNER & PRESENTATION for the entire family
Children's program (4 years - grade 5)
Nursery (under 4 years)



WELCOMING
YANNICK & ERIN IMBERT

Serving in Aix-en-Provence, France
at Faculté Jean Calvin where
Yannick is Professor of Apologetics.



Help save a life. Give blood.

Blood Drive

Wed., March 1 | 2-7PM

You make a difference.



Signup at lansdalepres.org/blood-drive

December 2022 Giving Opportunities

During the month of December, there were opportunities to support several different ministries and organizations. Thank you for sharing the love of our Savior through your financial support.

The **Sacrificial Offering for 2022** was designated for the continuing support of Rachel Hart's mission internship and also towards supporting future internships, including but not limited to potential PCA pastors, at LPC. This year LPC collected \$15,292.00 towards this endeavor. Thank you for your support!

Each year we take an offering on Christmas Eve for PCA Retirement & Benefits Ministerial Relief, now called "Look/After". This organization has been providing widows, retired pastors, and PCA church servants in need with financial, spiritual, and emotional help since 1973. The amount of the offering collected in 2022 and given to this ministry was \$3,857.00. Thank you for your support!

From a widow of a retired pastor: *"Words can never express our appreciation and gratitude for all you have done for us. We would have literally been on the streets if it wasn't for the support you have given to us. God bless you a hundredfold."*

Our Deacons have sponsored our own Angel Tree Ministry for many years at Christmas. The Lansdale Presbyterian Church Angel Tree 2022 was once again directed toward meeting the expressed needs of several anonymous clients of The Pregnancy Resource Clinic/North Care in Lansdale. Angel ornaments were displayed on the tree in the lobby and people were able to select and then purchase gift cards for Walmart and Amazon. Thank you for your support of the continuing partnership with The Pregnancy Resource Clinic/North Care clients!



Saturday, Feb. 4! 11AM at Sky Zone Chalfont!

[And, join us Sunday, Feb. 26, 5:30-7:30pm at church!]

KINGDOM KIDS

Kingdom Kids will be going to Skyzone in Chalfont, February 4th at 11:00 am. The cost is \$20 for 60 minutes; socks are \$3.00. If you plan to attend, email Celia Frattarelli (celia@lansdalepres.org) Friends and family members welcome!

Kingdom Kids will meet Sunday, February 26, from 5:30-7:30 pm at the church. Kids ages 4 - grade 5 are welcome to come out for a night of games, food, worship, and learning about Jesus.

LANSDALE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MISSIONS CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2023

9:15AM | 10:30AM | 5:00PM

PROCLAIMING CHRIST IN POST-CHRISTIAN FRANCE

Protestant Christians in France account for only 3% of the population, of which 660,000 or 1% are evangelicals. France, like much of the west, has become secular. Religious confusion runs rampant, and churches are often without strong convictions. Only two Protestant seminaries exist in France, and of those, only one is reformed - one seminary to train pastors to proclaim the gospel of grace to a people who see no need for it. That seminary, Faculté Jean Calvin in Aix-en-Provence, is where Erin and Yannick Imbert are called to serve.

Yannick teaches apologetics, which is defense of the Christian faith. He also regularly visits churches to preach, attend conferences, and coordinate Bible studies. **Erin serves as the seminary librarian**. In this role, she has close contact with students, often engaging them in conversations on matters of faith. The Imberts live on campus in a faculty apartment. This arrangement creates many ministry opportunities and deeper relationships that go beyond the typical teacher-student.

Yannick grew up in a Montmeyran, a rural village of 2,600 people in southeastern France. Montmeyran was home to a reformed church, where Yannick attended with his parents. After feeling unsettled in his college biology curriculum, he acted on his pastor's advice and took a year's sabbatical to study reformed theology at Faculté Jean Calvin. His studies eventually led to a D. Min. at Westminster Theological Seminary. While at Westminster, Yannick attended LPC from 2005-2007 and served on the Missions Committee.

Half a world away, Erin grew up in a Christian home in south Jersey and studied accounting at Ursinus College. After working as a CPA, she became more serious about her faith and in 2013 enrolled in the M. Div. program at Westminster. She worked part-time in the Financial Office and served as Treasurer of the Huguenot Fellowship, an organization that supports Faculté Jean Calvin. In 2014, when a small contingent from the Huguenot Fellowship traveled to the French seminary, Erin met Yannick. They were married a year later.



WELCOMING **Yannick & Erin Imbert**

**Serving at Faculté Jean Calvin
in Aix-en-Provence, France**

GOD'S CALLING

"It was a long process for both Erin and me to realize God's call on our lives. But God knew what he was doing and where he wanted us to serve.

Believing in God in 21st century France is a challenge. Our post-Christian culture expects one's faith to remain exclusively private.

The seminary in Aix encourages its students to seek the best way to share the gospel in a world that is intellectually resistant to its truth. What a great challenge. What a wonderful calling!"

- Yannick Imbert



YOUTH GROUP



SUPER BOWL PARTY

FOOD, FUN & FOOTBALL

SUN., FEB. 12 @ 6PM
GEORGE'S HOME



XXXXX
OOOOO

Youth Group Super Bowl Party
 Sunday, February 12th
 6:00 PM
 Hosted by the Georges

Please bring a side, dessert, or drink to share. Please connect with Darla to let her know what you are planning to bring: darlazang@gmail.com

The game will probably end around 9:30. Looking forward to seeing you there!
GO EAGLES!!

JOIN US THIS SUMMER!
SAVE THE DATE!





LPC MISSIONS TRIP • JULY 15-22, 2023 • FAIRMONT, WV

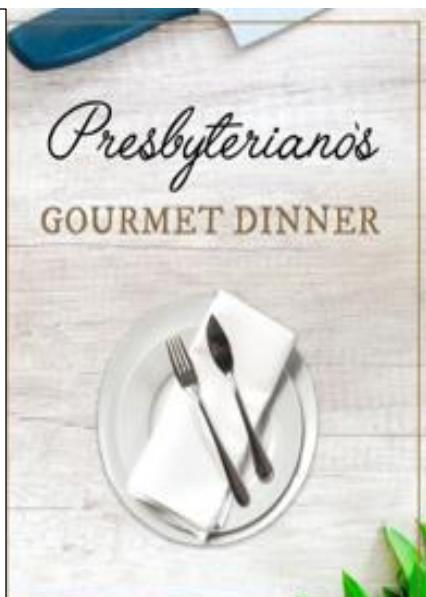
*** Sunday, Feb. 5! Sign-ups due! Team Meeting at 5:30pm at LPC!**

Presbyteriano's Gourmet Dinner...

...Returns on Saturday, February 18, at 6:00 pm. The cost is \$25 per person with proceeds benefitting this summer's youth WV Missions Trip. Childcare is available for infants through 5th grade.

Reserve your table now by signing up in the lobby before February 11th.

Don't miss out on a special evening of delicious food while being served by our own youth!



Join us for a special Dinner and Fundraiser!

Saturday, Feb. 18th
6:00 PM | LPC

Sign up in the Lobby

PROCEEDS BENEFIT
West Virginia Summer Missions Trip

What Does a Sexton Do?

By Ken Berg, Sexton

I have been asked this question at least twice in the last two months. To answer this let's start with the word itself. *Sexton* is a corruption of the Old English word *sextain*, which evolved from the Old French *segrestein*. The original word is the Medieval Latin term *sacristanus*, meaning "**custodian of sacred objects**".

It turns out I do **few of the traditional tasks** of a sexton. LPC has no sacred objects per se, so there is no care needed. I will not be digging graves since we don't have a graveyard. Earlier LPC sextons did all the cleaning and setup. The cleaning of the church is now done by a custodial company with which we are happy. Several ministries do their own setup and breakdown, and the rest is being done as-needed by others, so the sexton does little setup. Installations and repairs that are large, expensive, or technical are done by outside contractors.

So, what does the sexton do? The best answer is, he helps maintain LPC's property as a unique part of a team, the Deacons' Buildings and Grounds Committee, which is in-charge of the care. The sexton is the team member who is **present in the building during the day** for 15 hours per week, so he can escort inspectors and outside repairmen, such as the January Sprinkler System Inspector. He is also, like the other Buildings and Grounds Committee deacons, gifted by God with **handyman skills**.

The ministry of the Buildings and Grounds Committee is to do its part to bring glory to our Lord and expand His kingdom by thoughtful attention to the property He has blessed the congregation with. This focus can be largely described by three categories:

- A. Protecting the **safety** of our attendees. This has recently included repairing damaged playground equipment and securing untethered bookcases.
- B. **Enhancing our ministries.** One example is the Buildings and Grounds Committee itself felt hindered by the scattering of parts and tools throughout the property. These have now been collected, culled, and sorted. Another example is replacing burned out lights in the Sunday School classrooms.
- C. **Enhancing the worship experience** of attenders. Failing heat, empty paper towel dispensers, and coffee spills on the rugs can all hinder that experience, and so are actively attended to. Some needs are obvious and some are less obvious, like leaking plumbing and broken chairs.

The sexton coordinates with the other team members to get this work done.

There are **opportunities for anyone to participate** in this ministry. There is a "Tell the Sexton" notice pad in the boiler room to provide an easy way to make helpful suggestions or comments. The many "little fixes" on our do-list means we will be recruiting other helpful and skillful people for various workdays-yet to be announced. If you are interested, we look forward to your participation in a workday, which is also an easy way to get to know other LPC attenders.

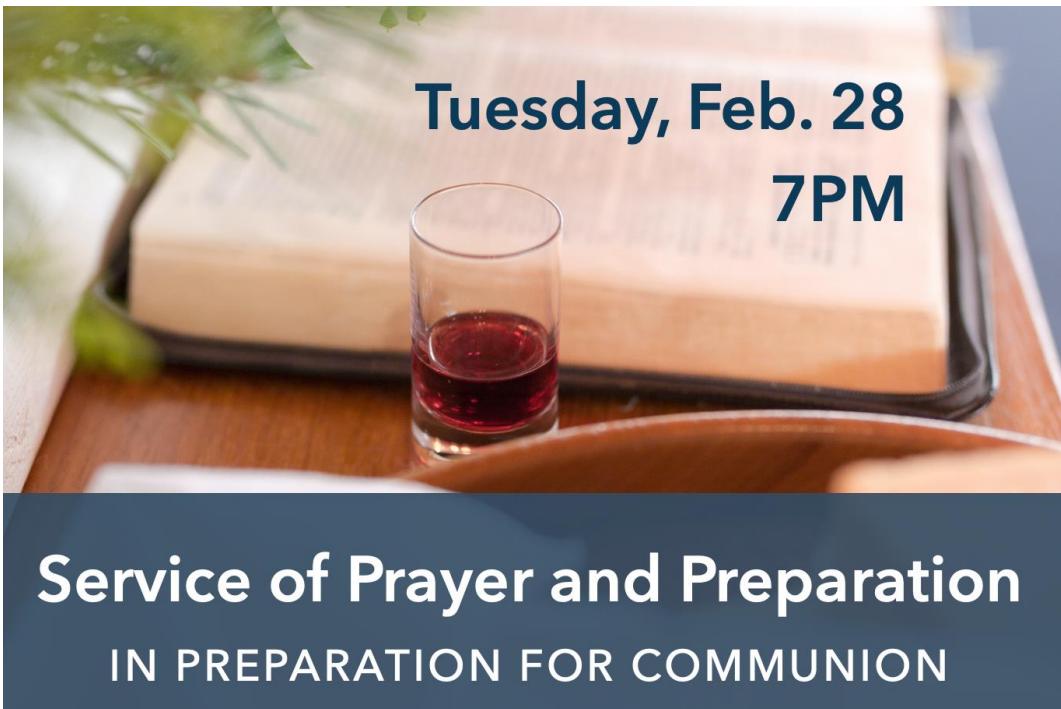
I am grateful that I was called to this position. I find it a lot of fun, and it is a perfect fit to my interests and gifts.

In Christ,
Ken Berg



GriefShare is a grief recovery support group for grieving people due to loss of a spouse, child, family member or close friend. The griever needs ongoing support and encouragement, lasting months, or perhaps longer.

The GriefShare meetings will begin on Tuesday evenings, March 7th, at 7:00 pm in the conference room. The meetings are approximately 90 minutes in length and the series is 13 weeks, not including the Prayer and Preparation Service weeks. While it's ideal for group members to attend all 13 sessions, each weekly session is designated to be "open", meaning a person can begin attending at any time. Members will find comfort, answers, and hope in every session. For more information, please ask Marilyn Rudolph.



A photograph of a communion wafer on a tray, with a glass of red wine in front of it. Overlaid text reads: "Tuesday, Feb. 28" and "7PM" in blue, and "Service of Prayer and Preparation IN PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION" in white on a dark blue bar at the bottom.

Year End Giving Statements

Year end giving statements for 2022 are available in the lobby 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. 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.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26



Food from the Heart

Last month's dinner was January 29th:

Guests: 38

Chef: Rob Hand

Menu: Salad, rolls/butter, meatloaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, roasted mixed vegetables, chocolate cookies and ice cream.

Speaker: Rachel Hart, Matthew 5:3

Interested in Helping?

Contact Rob Hand



YOUNG ADULT

BOOK DISCUSSION

MEETS
Thursday, Feb. 9 | 7-9 PM
LPC Library

The Secular Creed
by Rebecca McLaughlin

Learn More & Sign Up: lansdalepres.org/young-adults



FEBRUARY

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| <p>1 6:00 am Men's Ministry morning group *</p> <p>9:15 am Women's Bible study *</p> <p>6:30 pm Choir Rehearsal *</p> <p>2 7:00 pm Women's Bible study in person</p> <p>7:00 pm Women's Ministry Fellowship/Outreach Committee meeting</p> <p>7:00 pm Session meeting</p> <p>3 10:30 am Community Group *</p> <p>4 11:00 am Kingdom Kids at Skyzone</p> <p>5 8:00 am Band Rehearsal *</p> <p>9:15 am Sunday School for all ages *</p> <p>10:30 am Worship Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rev. Chris Kennedy preaching; Communion - New Member Recognition and Baptisms - All church lunch and congregational mtg. <p>No Community Groups</p> <p>5:30 pm West VA Missions Team meeting</p> <p>7:00 pm Youth Group social follows at Marilyn's and Rachel's</p> <p>7 11:30 am Seniors Living in Christ (SLIC) 2023 planning meeting</p> <p>6:30 pm ESL Classes *</p> <p>7:00 pm Christian Ed Board meeting</p> <p>8 7:30 pm Missions Committee meeting</p> <p>9 7:00 pm Young Adult Book Discussion</p> <p>7:00 pm Women's Bible study online *</p> | <p>12 10:30 am Worship Service *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rev. Chris Kennedy preaching <p>5:00 pm Community group online *</p> <p>5:30 pm Community groups (library & N. Wales)*</p> <p>6:00 pm Youth Group Superbowl Party</p> <p>13 7:00 pm Moms Together</p> <p>16 7:00 pm Session meeting</p> <p>17 5:00 pm Youth Group Presbyteriano's prep</p> <p>18 2:00 pm Youth Group Presbyteriano's prep</p> <p>6:00 pm Presbyteriano's Dinner</p> <p>19 10:30 am Worship Service *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rev. Chris Kennedy preaching No Youth Group <p>20 7:00 pm Deacons' Mercy Ministry meeting</p> <p>22 7:00 pm Moms Together committee meeting</p> <p>26 10:30 am Worship Service *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rev. Brian Hand preaching <p>1:00 pm Food From the Heart Dinner</p> <p>5:30 pm Kingdom Kids</p> <p>27 7:00 pm Elders' wives meeting</p> <p>28 7:00 pm Service of Prayer and Preparation</p> |
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* Meets weekly