

## *We Are Witnesses*

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Acts 1:6-14; John 17:1-11  
Lewinsville Presbyterian Church  
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Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." According to Acts 1, the purpose of the church is to *bear witness in the world to Jesus*. We are to bear witness – to give testimony - about Jesus in our words, in our actions, in our relationships, the way we handle our money, the way we care for the earth, the way we treat those who are different from us. Because our faith in Jesus affects every part of our lives, every part of our lives bears witness to the impact Jesus is having on us.

What kind of testimony do our lives give to the world about Jesus? If people are curious about Jesus, and they know that we are followers of Jesus, what would they deduce or learn about Jesus from observing and listening to us? And according to Acts 1, the only way for us to be witnesses to Jesus is *to receive the power of the Holy Spirit*.

In a couple of weeks, I'll begin a 12-week sabbatical, made possible by this congregation. I am so thankful for this season of rest and renewal. During these 12 weeks, my primary goal is *to unplug*. I've come to realize that my soul has, in fact, grown weary. When I read in Matthew 11 that Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary, and I will give you rest," I am realizing that these words land with a particular force and directness in my heart. I was ordained in 1999 and have not yet taken a sabbatical, during these 24 years. I used to think that it was somehow heroic to just keep on plowing. But it turns out that was not such a great idea.

Pastoral ministry is an astonishing privilege – to serve and love Jesus Christ in this way, to serve and love and lead congregations in this way. Pastoral ministry is an astonishing privilege. *And*, it is a spiritually and emotionally demanding role. I do not say this with an ounce of self-pity, because everyone who goes into this role understands that this will be the case. But it also means that regular times of rest are necessary.

So I will be unplugging from things here at Lewinsville over the summer. Pastor Layne will be acting head of staff during the summer, but Pastor Layne and Pastor Jen, along with John and Allison and the rest of the staff, will also have their regular responsibilities to attend to, so they will need the rest of the congregation to step in, to deal with things that come up. Layne and Jen and I have done some work to think through and try to anticipate how things will go this summer. The staff, the Session, the

Deacons/Stephen Ministers, the Ministry Groups and committees – Lewinsville Presbyterian has long been blessed with deep resources of leadership. I'm looking forward to getting back at the end of August, hearing what things came up during the summer, and how you all handled them.

We are witnesses to Jesus Christ, in everything that we do. That includes the work that we do, and it includes the rest that we take. Receiving the power of the Holy Spirit is the only way we can bear that witness. May we be prepared to have that power come upon us, in increasing and deepening ways. To God and to God alone be all the glory, now and forever. Amen.