

FALL

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2026

THE LEWINSVILLE NEWSLETTER

Lewinsville
Presbyterian Church

GROWING UP IN CHRIST TOGETHER

REV. DR. SCOTT RAMSEY, PASTOR

Dear Lewinsville Friends,

Our congregational theme for the coming year – “Teleios: Growing Up Together In Christ” (see inside, page 3 for more details) is very challenging. In Ephesians 4:13, Paul summons “all of us [to] come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity (teleios), to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

Paul is telling us to “grow up.”

But he doesn’t mean it in a punitive, or even a very chastising, way. (Well, there may be a little bit of chastising going on.) He is summoning the Christian church to a particular shape of maturity – maturity in Christ.

When we grow up into Christ, we will begin to embody the “fruit of the Spirit” – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

As we grow up into Christ, our lives will look more and more like Jesus. We will do the things Jesus did – welcome the stranger, love our enemies, serve the poor, stand with those who are vulnerable, forgive those who have wronged us, speak our minds clearly and simply, listen with generosity and patience, live with abiding joy.

With every single one of those characteristics, I find myself thinking, “Yeah, I’ve got a long way to go with that one.” Living like Jesus, growing up together into Christ, becoming mature in the way of Jesus – these things are inherently challenging. But they are also exactly the way I want to live my life. I hope you do, too!

Blessings for our journey,
Pastor Scott



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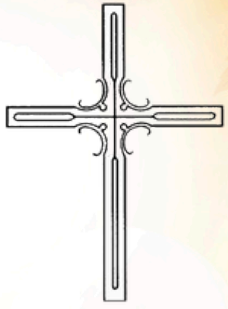
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FALL SCHEDULE OF SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICES

KICKOFF SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 13, 2026

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2026, 4 p.m.

ANNIVERSARY SUNDAY
OCTOBER 18, 2026

REFORMATION SUNDAY
OCTOBER 25, 2026



Looking

AHEAD

ALL SAINTS' DAY
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2026

JOIN US FOR KICKOFF SUNDAY

Program Year Launches September 13, 2026

Plan to join us on Sunday morning, September 13, for Kickoff Sunday! We will be starting the new program year off with a bang!! We will launch our new theme for this year – "Teleios: Growing Up Together In Christ" – with a special guest speaker for Adult Education, and fellowship opportunities for all ages. Good fun, good refreshments, great energy, and another year of growing in our faith together!

CONGREGATIONAL THEME FOR 2026–27

TELEIOS: Growing Up Together into Christ

In Ephesians 4:13, Paul describes the goal of our life together as becoming *teleios*—a Greek word that can mean mature, complete, or fully grown— "to the measure of the full stature of Christ." This year, we are taking *Teleios* as our congregational theme: an invitation to grow up together into Christ. None of us has arrived—not our pastors, not our leaders, not any of us.

Christian maturity is not about becoming more certain of our own goodness, nor is it about becoming more critical of the shortcomings of others. It is about becoming more deeply rooted in Christ, more open to the Spirit's transforming work, and more capable of loving God and our neighbors with wisdom, courage, humility, and grace.

What might that kind of growing up look like among us? It might mean becoming more generous with what God has entrusted to us, and wiser about how we use it. It might mean having enough humility to listen, ask for forgiveness, learn, and change. It might mean finding the courage to speak truth and stand with those who are vulnerable when we encounter bullying, cruelty, or injustice. And it will mean growing in the ordinary, lifelong practices of faithfulness and compassion through which Christ takes shape in us. *Teleios* is not a demand that we become perfect. It is a call to keep growing—together—toward "the full stature of Christ."



STEWARDSHIP 2027 CAMPAIGN: OPEN-HANDED GENEROSITY

October 11–25, 2026

As we continue our journey toward *teleios*—growing together into the fullness of Christ—we are reminded that one of the clearest signs of Christian maturity is not simply what we know, but how we love, serve, and share. This fall, our stewardship theme, "Open-Handed Generosity," invites us to reflect on the God whose hands are always open toward us in grace, mercy, and abundant provision.

In grateful response, we are called to live with open hands ourselves—offering our time, gifts, and financial resources for the sake of Christ's mission in and through our church. Together, we will explore what it means to live generously, trusting that as God opens our hearts, God will continue to provide all that is needed for the ministry we share. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Pastor Scott or to Lloyd Mustin, chair of the Stewardship Committee.

DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS: LIVING THE THEME

Lewinsville Groups That Endure

Over the summer, the sermon series focused on the theme of Deepening Relationships. Through the course of the series, family stories of vulnerability, grief, renewal, compassion, belonging and hope were told through the scriptures. This provided a variety of ways to explore the foundational claim that *we cannot know God without knowing each other*. Everyone has been encouraged to do something that may feel uncomfortable—reaching out to someone they don't know. And through this action, a new sustainable relationship could grow.

As you may surmise, given the nearly 200 hundred year life of Lewinsville, many relationships have developed. In our present time, there are several that have survived through both joy and pain. In this issue, “meet” the Second Saturday Set and The Lost Sheep.

THE SECOND SATURDAY SET: 60 Years and Counting

BY CATHY GAUGLER

Back in 1971, two young members of the church, Lois Dokken and Liz Stevens, were volunteering in the crib room and talking about moving here and leaving family and old friends, and, intentionally or not, they decided to create a new family.

They called other families with young children and invited them to a party. Those who attended had such a good time, they decided to meet again ... and again ... and then monthly. ***It started out on a social basis, but over the years, it became a family. We have been with each other through happy times like new babies, graduations, children's weddings and grandchildren, and hard times like medical conditions and losses, just like a family.***

We have traveled together to visit members who have moved and enjoyed parties in Charleston, Colorado, Minnesota, Williamsburg and Iceland. Most SSS members are deeply involved in the life of the church and have served on Session and committees, sung in choirs, and taught Sunday School and adult ed classes. Lewinsville is our home.

I don't know what made it work. Younger groups formed after us didn't last. We lived in Libertyville, IL for four years and tried to form a similar group in our church there. It never quite worked. I think it needed Lois and Liz. We'd love to have you join us as we enter our sixth decade.



1996: Farm at Luray, VA



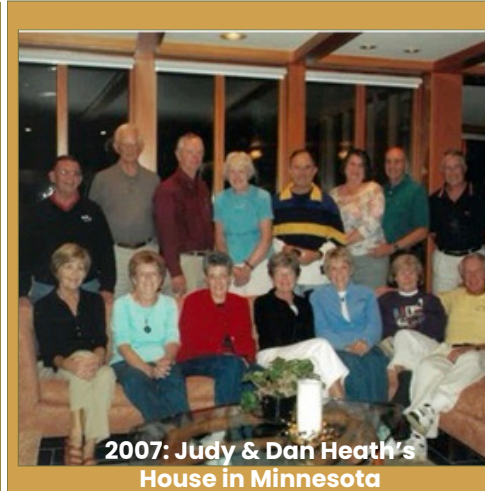
1999: Christmas Party at Jackson's House



2026: Summer Party at Johnsons



2009: Dokken's River House



2007: Judy & Dan Heath's House in Minnesota

THE LOST SHEEP: Knitting Time

BY CAROL KAFFENBERGER

The Lost Sheep Ministry provides knitted and crocheted prayer shawls, lap blankets and pocket prayer squares to members of our congregation at times of illness, crisis or sometimes joy and celebration. The gift of one of these items is a perfect way to send our congregation's message of love and support and a reminder that God is with you always.

The Prayer Shawl Ministry has been in place for more than 20 years. In that time we have provided more than 2,000 shawls and blankets and hundreds of prayer squares. In 2025 we distributed approximately 100 shawls including shawls for our church's trip to Kenya and in support of the Andy Colins's support ministry in North Carolina.

The Prayer Shawl Ministry are twelve women who meet twice a month to create the shawls, blankets and squares that we make available to members, their friends and family. *Our group has become its own small group of support to one another. We look forward to our time together and catching up on one another's lives. Being with this group on a regular basis means the world to me.*

And the joy the group gets from hearing from recipients who express their gratitude or send thank you notes saying how meaningful our shawls or blanket have been. Recipients sometimes share that the shawl arrived at a moment when they were feeling most alone or most challenged by their circumstances. We have loved the connections our shawls and blankets create.

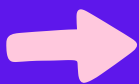
Providing shawls, lap blankets and prayer squares to our members, and their family and friends is a meaningful way to express our love. Please be in touch with us if you know of someone in your life who would appreciate the gift of a shawl or blanket. Contact Carol Kaffenberger (ckaffenb@gmail.com or call 703-407-6311).



We sent shawls with the Lewinsville 2025 Kenya Mission Team visiting the United Orphanage & Academy in Moi's Bridge. We provided a shawl for each staff member of the school. Our members told us how much the shawls were appreciated.



This blanket was made for long time member Mary Ann Phillip.



INVITE SOMEONE TO YOUR TABLE

REV. LAYNE B. BRUBAKER, ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Dear Lewinsville,

This summer I preached a sermon about a monkey.

You may remember Punch, the young monkey born in a zoo outside Tokyo who was rejected by his mother and given a stuffed animal to hold as a surrogate. And the question I kept coming back to was this: why is it so much easier to see loneliness in a monkey than in the person sitting right next to us?

I have been living inside that question all summer. And I want to tell you what I have found.

This summer I had the extraordinary privilege of traveling with two groups of our young people and their adult leaders. In June we traveled to Spindale, North Carolina for Summer Mission Project. In July a group of us made our way to the mountains of Montreat for the Youth Conference. Two trips. Two very different experiences. And the same thing happened on both of them.

We got to know each other.

Not in the way you get to know someone over coffee after church, where everyone is reasonably well rested and reasonably well dressed and has had a chance to prepare for the conversation. I mean in the way that only travel makes possible. When you are sharing a van for eight hours, or eating every meal together for a week, or navigating an unexpected problem at eleven o'clock at night, something happens. The performance falls away. The carefully curated version of yourself that you present to the world starts to slip. And what is left is just you. The real you. Tired and hungry and a little ridiculous and completely yourself.

Summer Mission Project does this better than almost anything I have ever experienced. There is something about the combination of hard physical work, simple living, shared meals, and evening devotions that whittles people down to their core. You cannot hide at SMP. There is nowhere to hide. And what I watch happen every single year, what I watched happen again this summer, is that people discover something extraordinary in that vulnerable exposed place: they are still loved. Still accepted. Still wanted. The real them, without the polish, is enough. More than enough.

That is not a small thing. That is the gospel.

And here is what I want to say to this congregation as we head into a new program year together. The work of deepening relationships has barely begun.

I know that some of you have heard the sermon series this summer and thought, that is lovely, but my life is already full. I have good friendships. I have a rich community. I do not really need to do anything differently. If that is you, I am speaking directly to you right now. Your fullness is a gift and I am genuinely glad for it. But fullness was never meant to be hoarded. The work God is calling you to is not to find more community for yourself. It is to share what you already have. To expand your table. To notice who is on the outside of your circle and take one deliberate step toward them. Your wealth of relationship is not just for you. This congregation needs you to spend it generously.

And if you are on the other side of that equation, if you have been sitting in these pews feeling like everyone else has found their people and somehow you have not, I want you to hear this as clearly as I can say it. You are not imagining it.



Pastor Layne Meets a Friend
on the Summer
Mission Project

Pastor Layne Letter *(continued)*

Loneliness is real and it is not your fault and you are not alone in feeling it. But I am asking you to take one brave step. Show up to one thing you have been putting off. Introduce yourself to one person whose name you do not know. Come to Youth Fellowship or Dinner Church or the Blessing of the Animals or any of the many gatherings this fall where the whole point is to be together. This church needs you in it, not on the edges.

Here is what I know. The loneliness crisis is real. The fraying of community is real. And the antidote is not a program or a campaign or a clever sermon series, as much as I have enjoyed preaching one this summer. The antidote is people deciding, one at a time, to stop waiting for community to happen to them and to start making it happen for someone else.

This fall I am asking you to make that decision. Not in a big dramatic way. Just one step. One conversation. One name learned. One invitation extended. One Sunday morning when you linger a little longer than feels comfortable and end up talking to someone you have never really talked to before.

The work of knowing and being known is the most important work this congregation will do this year. I believe that with everything I have. And I believe this community is ready for it.

I cannot wait to see what happens when we all show up for it together.

With love and great anticipation,

Pastor Layne



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-Pastor Layne

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP RETURNS

A Space to Be Known

BY PASTOR LAYNE BRUBAKER

Youth Fellowship kicks off on Sunday evening, September 13, from 6 to 8 p.m. in the youth room, and I could not be more excited to welcome our middle and high school students back together. Come hungry. There will be a shared meal, time in conversation about faith, and the thing this group does best: having a genuinely good time together.

I want to tell you **why I believe this matters so much.**

Youth ministry researcher and theologian Kenda Creasy Dean has spent decades studying **what makes faith stick in young people.** Her research is both clarifying and convicting. **Faith** does not primarily form through programs or curricula or the right series of lessons. It **forms through relationships.** Through the experience of being genuinely known by a community that takes both you and your questions seriously. Through encountering adults who are honest about their own faith, including their doubts, and who show up consistently enough that young people begin to trust that they will not disappear.

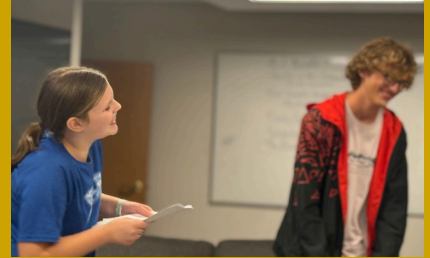
Andy Root, another leading voice in youth theology, puts it even more directly. The most important thing the church can offer young people is not entertainment or relevant programming. It is a place where they encounter the living God through real relationships with real people. A place where they are seen. A place where they belong not because they have earned it or performed well enough, but simply because they showed up.

This is what Youth Fellowship is designed to be. Not just a fun activity on a Sunday night, though I take the fun seriously, too. But a **space that belongs to our young people.** A room where they can **walk in carrying whatever they are carrying** that week and **set it down for a while.** Where they can laugh loudly and ask hard questions and trust that the people around them are not going anywhere. **Where faith is not something handed to them** from the front of a room but something **they discover together,** in the mess and the laughter and the honest conversation of **real community.**

“The most important thing the church can offer young people...a place where they encounter the living God through real relationships with real people.

Andy Root”

Youth in Action



Youth Fellowship (continued)

The research is clear and my own experience confirms it: young people who have a space like this, who are genuinely known by a faith community during their adolescent years, carry that formation with them. Not always loudly. Not always in ways they can articulate right away. But it roots in them. And it holds.

So if you have a middle or high schooler at home, mark September 13 on your calendar and send them to youth fellowship. And if you are an adult in this congregation who has ever wondered how you can support our young people, the answer is simpler than you might think. Show up. Learn their names. Let them know you are paying attention.

Youth Fellowship. Sunday, September 13
6 to 8 p.m. in the youth room. Dinner provided. Everyone welcome.



DINNER CHURCH RETURNS

Four Evenings to Gather, Eat, and Worship Together

Join us for casual worship during four carefully crafted evenings. The idea behind Dinner Church is simple: we gather around a table, we share a meal, and we worship together in a way that is intimate, unhurried, and real. If you have never been to a Dinner Church at Lewinsville, this is the year to come.

Here is what we have planned:

Sunday, October 18 — Bachtoberfest Dinner Church

Following the Bachtoberfest concert, we will gather for a German feast and a worship experience centered on music, faith, and the remarkable life of Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach understood his music as an offering to God, and we will spend the evening reflecting on what it means to worship through beauty, and what one faithful musician's life can teach us about devotion.

Sunday, December 20 — Longest Night Dinner Church

The holiday season is full of joy and it is also, for many of us, full of grief. The Longest Night service has become a meaningful tradition in the church calendar, creating space for those who find December complicated. We will slow down together, share a meal, and make room for the full range of what this season brings. All are welcome, especially those who need a quiet place to breathe in the middle of the noise.

Tuesday, February 9, 2027 — Mardi Gras Pancake Dinner Church

Mardi Gras is the church's tradition of feasting before the season of fasting, and we are bringing it to the dinner table with pancakes and celebration. This evening we will worship God and reflect on what it means to lean into the abundance and joy that Jesus offers us. Come hungry. Come ready to celebrate.

Thursday, March 25, 2027 — Maundy Thursday Dinner Church

Our final Dinner Church of the year falls on one of the most sacred evenings of the Christian calendar. On the night Jesus gathered with his disciples for a last meal, he gave them a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you. Together we will share a meal, reflect on that commandment, and prepare our hearts for the journey toward Easter.

Four evenings. Four tables. One community gathered around the most ancient and holy thing we know how to do together. We hope to see you there.

Watch the bulletin and your email for details on each evening as it approaches. And if you have never been to a Dinner Church before, let this be your year.

THE ROCKS OF AGES

**Friday, September 25
11:30 a.m.**

Rooms 102 A & B

The Senior Songsters, a popular group at Chesterbrook, will perform and lead us in a sing-along. The group includes our own John Thomas.



**Friday, October 23
11:30 a.m.**

Rooms 102 A & B

Pastor Jen Dunfee shares details of her summer Sabbatical and what she has planned for children and families in the coming months. Please join us to hear her interesting stories.



**Reservations in advance
help us plan for
food and seating.**

Please RSVP to Bill Black
wmjblack@gmail.com
Wendy Maiwurm at
wmaiwurm@gmail.com.

A donation of \$7
to cover lunch
is appreciated.

BRING YOUR PET FOR THE BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

PASTOR LAYNE BRUBAKER

Sunday, September 27, 4 p.m.

Lewinsville Presbyterian Church will gather outside for one of my favorite events of the entire year: the Blessing of the Animals.

Bring your dogs, your cats, your rabbits, your guinea pigs, and whatever other beloved creatures share your home and your heart. All animals are welcome, and so are the people who love them. (Animals must be on a leash or in a carrier.)

The Blessing of the Animals falls near the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, who believed that every creature reflects something of the glory of God. I could not agree more.

Anyone who has ever been loved by a pet knows that there is something holy in that bond, something that points beyond itself to the One who made all living things and called them good.

This is a brief and joyful outdoor service. Come as you are. And come ready to celebrate the animals who make our lives richer, funnier, and more full of love than they would otherwise be.

Lewinsville
Presbyterian Church

Blessing of the Animals

Bring Your Furry Family Member for
a Service Just for Them.



Sunday, Sept. 27, 4 p.m.
Lewinsville Pavilion

**Pets must be on a leash
or in a carrier.**



2025
Blessing of the Animals

THE “FIERY FURNACE PATROL” TAKES TO THE STREETS

BY SUSAN BARTRAM

On one of the hottest days in July, members of Lewinsville’s Earth Care team, calling themselves the “Fiery Furnace Patrol,” joined with volunteers across Fairfax County, Arlington County and Alexandria to collect street-level high-resolution temperature and humidity data.

Teams fanned out across 30 driving routes, three times during the day, with sensors attached to their vehicles to record street-level high-resolution temperature and humidity data that traditional satellites cannot capture. Lewinsville’s assigned route zig zagged through McLean.

Data collection by citizen scientists was the first phase of a Heat Mapping Project being conducted by George Mason University’s Virginia Climate Center in partnership with the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions. According to the [US Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related mortality in the United States. The risk of heat-related death and illness is expected to increase as extreme heat events become more frequent and intense due to climate change. The Heat Mapping Project is an important step in helping communities in Northern VA prepare for a warmer future.

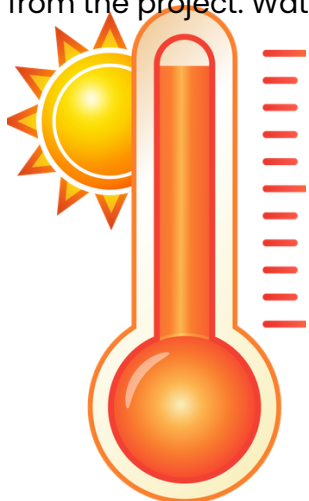
Professional scientists are analyzing the data collected in July, and creating high resolution maps and visualizations designed to inform urban planning decisions, support public health interventions, and, of particular interest to faith-based groups, advance environmental equity. Results will be released this fall.

Having hyper-localized, easily viewed data will enable communities to effectively target interventions, such as planting trees, adding shade structures, or implementing “cool roof” mandates, to areas where they are needed most.

The “Fiery Furnace Patrol” appreciated the opportunity to engage directly with real-world scientific research. They found it rewarding to be part of a community-wide effort, and look forward to assisting with actions that may result from the project. Watch for updates!



The Lewinsville Earth Care Team AKA “Fiery Furnace Patrol” spent a sweltering July day driving to capture temperatures and humidity as part of a Heat Mapping Project conducted by George Mason University’s Virginia Climate Center in partnership with the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions.





Lewinsville
Presbyterian Church

Mission and Service

New Mission Partner

JED AND JENNY KOBALL, PC (USA) MISSION CO-WORKERS, LIMA, PERU

This fall we are excited to formally introduce Lewinsville Presbyterian Church's newest international mission partnership: Jed and Jenny Koball, PC(USA) Mission Co-Workers living and serving in Lima, Peru.

This is not a partnership that came to us through a brochure or a database. Pastor Layne and Pastor Scott know Jed and Jenny personally. When Pastor Layne served as a Young Adult Volunteer, or YAV coordinator in New Orleans, Jenny and Layne were in regular contact.

Jed serves as the Global Ecumenical Liaison for the Amazon, Andes, and Southern Cone of South America. His work sits at the intersection of faith, justice, and creation care, focusing on climate justice, indigenous rights, and advocacy against extractive mining industries that harm vulnerable communities across Latin America. He spends his days building networks, facilitating conversations, and connecting the PC(USA) with partners across an enormous and complex region.

Jenny serves as the YAV Peru Site Coordinator, overseeing the Young Adult Volunteers program in Peru. The YAV program places young adults ages 19 to 30 in a year of intentional service, community, and spiritual formation in partnership with local organizations. Jenny creates the conditions for that transformative experience to happen for a new cohort of young people every year.

In the months ahead we will be sharing regular updates from Jed and Jenny in worship and in print. We are also exploring opportunities for deeper engagement, including supporting young adults from our congregation who might be interested in a YAV year in Peru, and potentially a congregational immersion trip down the road. For now, please keep Jed and Jenny in your prayers. They are doing truly good work in the world, and we are grateful to call them our partners.



LADY DOAK COLLEGE MADURAI, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

This fall we are delighted to introduce another new international mission partnership for Lewinsville Presbyterian Church: Lady Doak College, a women's college in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India.

This partnership came to us the best possible way—through one of our own. Congregation member Irene Foster brought Lady Doak College to our attention, and her connection to it runs deep. Irene's mother, Amirtha, served on Lady Doak's board for six years, and Irene herself has worked with the college.



Lady Doak College was founded in 1948 by Katie Wilcox, an American educational missionary who had served in India since 1915. She opened the college's doors with 81 students, a small library, one hostel, and several thatched sheds, making it the first women's college in Madurai. In 1978, Lady Doak became one of the earliest colleges in India to receive academic autonomy, a recognition of its academic excellence. Today it continues its mission of educating women and serving the surrounding community.

One of the most tangible ways Lewinsville will support Lady Doak College is through student scholarships. \$1,200 US dollars covers the full cost of a student's entire college degree. That is not a semester. That is not a year. That is a complete college education for a young woman who might not otherwise have access to one. Lewinsville has committed to donating scholarship funds as part of our partnership, and we hope this will be something our whole congregation can participate in and get excited about in the months ahead.



We are excited about what this partnership might become. In the months ahead we will share more about Lady Doak's current programs and needs, and we will explore opportunities for deeper engagement, including the possibility of a congregational immersion trip to Madurai in the future.

Please keep Lady Doak College and the women it serves in your prayers as we begin this new relationship together.





JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND JUMP START PRE-SCHOOL

This fall Lewinsville Presbyterian Church is excited to announce a new local mission partnership with Jumpstart Christian Preschool, a ministry of Knox Presbyterian Church located just a few miles from us in West Falls Church, Virginia.

Jumpstart Christian Preschool was founded on a simple but powerful conviction—every child deserves a loving and excellent start in life. Their motto says it well, “Love each child. Value each soul. Educate each mind.”

The school serves children ages two through five in a warm, bilingual environment, with teachers who speak both English and Spanish. Their goal is straightforward and beautiful: that every child who walks through their doors enters kindergarten fully prepared, with confidence and joy.

What makes this partnership particularly meaningful is who Jumpstart serves. Right next door to Knox Presbyterian Church are two affordable housing communities, Kingsley Park and Kingsley Commons, home to many immigrant and working class families in our area. These are families who might not otherwise have access to quality early childhood education. Jumpstart exists specifically to change that. They offer small class sizes, intentional enrichment including science, chapel, physical education, and even introductions to Japanese and Spanish, and a community that welcomes children of all backgrounds and faith traditions without proselytizing.



Jumpstart offers scholarship assistance to families who need financial support, and this is where Lewinsville comes in. As we begin this partnership, we will be supporting their scholarship fund, helping to ensure that a child's family income is never a barrier to receiving a strong and loving start. Knox is also currently undergoing building renovations that will allow Jumpstart to expand to approximately 50 students when complete in fall of 2026, and we are glad to be joining them at this exciting moment of growth.

This is local mission at its most tangible. A child in our own backyard, in a classroom a few miles from this building, getting the start they deserve because a community of faith decided to show up. We hope you will join us in praying for Jumpstart Christian Preschool, their teachers, their families, and the children they serve.



*Photos courtesy
Kathleen Petrey*

FINDING THE WORDS FOR THE FAITH WE SHARE

BY REV. JEN DUNFEE, STATED SUPPLY PASTOR FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

In the last newsletter I invited the congregation to read one of the six books I planned to read this summer on my sabbatical. If reading a book of Christian practice and theology is not your thing, and even if it is, here is a new recommendation, watch *The Sheep Detectives*. (The movie is PG, so I suggest parents read about it to determine if it is right for the ages of their children.) The movie arises from a rather ridiculous concept about sheep solving the murder mystery of their shepherd.

From that premise, it includes beautiful theological ideas about what is worth remembering, grief, sacrificing for others, facing hard things, what makes a shepherd "good" and this description of God that got me laughing so hard I had to pause the movie, "God is a big invisible lamb God and they eat him on Sunday."



One of my favorite things about being a parent who follows Jesus is the language and specific ways for talking to my kids about that list: what is worth remembering, grief, sacrificing for others, facing hard things, the presence of the Good Shepherd in all things. I have spoken in parenting classes about my tradition of writing a specific letter related to the personality and life circumstances for each of my children upon their leaving for college. Part of that derives from parental (and pastoral) anxiety that I have not modeled the faith I want them to live, or shared why Jesus is my Lord and Savior in ways they can understand. A part is also for each child to know they can look to and for Jesus in anything that comes their way in life.



I have taken out the personal references to share this part of my letter to Tommy: Losses are redeemed, God moves the arc towards good, tomb doors open: Jesus is the light of the world, and darkness cannot overcome it. There is no explanation for evil and grief that makes sense, but God doesn't promise us an explanation: God just overcomes it with redemptive power. When we are in what feels like a tomb with a heavy door, Jesus can crack that door open and let the light in.

For everything that feels like it can kill us, Jesus can redeem us from what has broken us and give us a new hope. Bad things happen to us, and I don't get how God relates to that (but I don't think God sends us the bad) ; but I do believe God can bend anything towards peace, healing and wholeness.

This season, if you are reading or watching, I pray you find something that inspires your heart to mind to find the words for yourself or others for the faith we share. I look forward to sharing my reading and writing, and watching on my sabbatical with you.

Blessings,
Pastor Jen

ADULT EDUCATION UPDATE

BY RACHEL ANN RUSSELL



Adult Education classes resume on September 20, kicking off an exciting new program year! This fall features two diverse tracks, special presentations, and plenty of variety. Our goal is always to make it hard to choose which class to attend! Throughout the year, we will explore Bible study, theology, history, modern-day concerns, arts, inspiration, and life skills.

Here is a look at what's coming up:

- Starting September 20 (5-Week Sessions):
 - **Track 1:** Linton Brooks will teach a variety of Bible study classes.
 - **Track 2:** Pastor Jen and Pastor Layne will lead a class titled "AI, Aliens, and Alternate Reality," open to anyone from middle school age and up.
- **Save the Date (October 25): For Reformation Sunday**, we are thrilled to welcome Dr. Suzanne McDonald, professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Western Theological Seminary

Coming later in the fall: Pastor Scott will lead a study on Ephesians, and we'll have a class that will focus on Grandparents and Grand parenting, and more. The Adult Ed committee is excited for a fantastic year ahead!

Dr. SHANE BERG SPEAKS ON KICK-OFF SUNDAY

You Truly Belong: An Introduction to Ephesians

September 13, 2026 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Dr. Shane Berg returns to Lewinsville Presbyterian Church on Kick-Off Sunday for "Who Are We Together?"

An Introduction to the Book of Ephesians." This year, Lewinsville is drawing from Ephesians 4 to further explore the theme of deepening relationships. Dr. Berg taught Ephesians during his time at Princeton Seminary, and Pastor Layne was a student of his in that class.



Dr. Berg earned his MDiv degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and his PhD in New Testament and Ancient Christianity from Yale University. Dr. Berg was the Executive Vice President of Princeton Theology Seminary. Before entering administration, Dr. Berg served on the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary for seven years as Assistant Professor of New Testament.

REFORMATION SUNDAY GUEST PREACHER

Dr. Suzanne McDonald will teach at 9:30 a.m. and preach the 11 a.m. service

Being Catholic Before the Reformation: What Art and a Will Can Teach Us

Sunday, October 25, 2026 9:30 a.m. class and 11 a.m. service



The story of the Reformation is often told in ways that make it sound like the pre-Reformation Roman Catholic church was in a terrible mess, and most people were longing for reform.

But pre-Reformation Catholicism was vibrant and many could hardly imagine life without its formative practices. Through art and a woman's will, we will look at what worship and spirituality were like for ordinary people on the eve of the Reformation, and so gain a different perspective on what the Protestant Reformers were determined to sweep away and why.

GUEST TEACHER DISCUSSES ALIENS, AI AND ALTERNATE REALITY

Sunday, October 4, 2026, 9:30 a.m.



Kathryn Reklis came to Fordham in 2012 after earning her PhD from Yale University, with prior degrees from Yale Divinity School, and undergraduate study in English Literature, creative writing, and documentary photography at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

She currently serves as the Co-Director of the Comparative Literature program at Fordham and is an Affiliate Faculty Member in American Studies.

Blending methods from cultural history, critical theory, and literary study, she is interested in the conditions of possibility that make theological belief and practice possible at any given moment.

At Fordham, she teaches courses on modern Christian history, colonialism and empire, aesthetics and modernity, digital religion, and American Evangelicalism." She also writes the "Screen Time" article for the Christian Century, examining theological themes in TV and movies. Dr. Reklis has lectured and published on AI (including a lecture entitled, "They Will Know You by Your Love (Of Robots!)") Aliens and Alternate Reality, and was a classmate of Pastor Jen's at Divinity School.

A graphic for the course "ALIENS, AI AND ALTERNATE REALITY". It features a circular frame containing Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam" painting, but with a robotic hand reaching towards the central figure. The text "ALIENS, AI AND ALTERNATE REALITY" is written around the circle. Below the graphic, the text reads: "SEPT 20 - OCT 18, AT 9:30 A.M. ADULT EDUCATION COURSE LEWINSVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH". At the bottom, a paragraph describes the course: "Pastor Layne, Pastor Jen and guest speaker Dr. Katie Reklis explore how the possibility of Aliens, the advance of AI, and Alternative Reality spaces challenge our theological claims of the nature of humanity, what it means to be created 'imago Dei' and how we understand, relate to, and worship God."

Five Cities Bible Study

Monday, Sept. 21

6:30 p.m.

The model of a casual five-part Bible Study over a 5 Guys dinner returns with a new theme: Five Cities.

While learning about Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Babylon, Jericho and Rome, we will see how God's covenantal and redeeming love moves through places as well as people. It also affords us an opportunity to get to know one another.

Faith and Fellowship

Wednesday, Sept. 9,

6:30 p.m.

This popular format returns for a 10-week session.

Fall Slice and Share

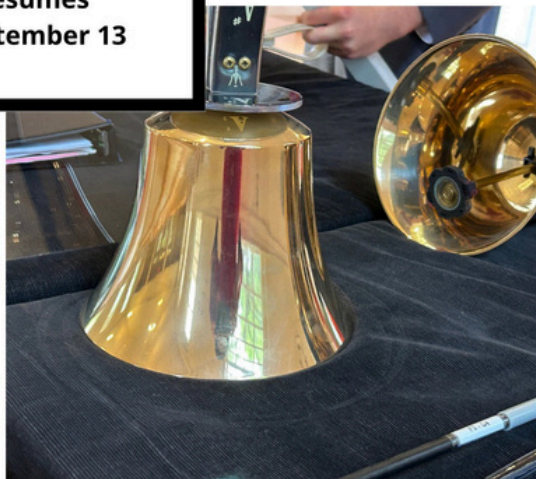
Sunday, Oct. 4

Right after the service, come for pizza and conversation. We gather in rooms 102 A-B.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Kids Sunday morning
and afternoon
programming
resumes
September 13



AGES

AGES 4-1ST GRADE

2ND - 5TH GRADE

PARENT BREAK-OUT

SCHEDULE

9:30 A.M. JOYFUL NOISE MUSIC
10 A.M. GODLY PLAY

9:30 SUNDAY SCHOOL WITH HANDS
ON BIBLE STORIES

9:30 PARENT DISCUSSION OF TOPIC
BIBLE PASSAGE

SAVE the DATE



What is

Messy Church?
Come find out on
Kick-Off Sunday!

**Sunday, September 13
10 a.m.**

Messy Church is whole-family interactive worship and stations exploring a theme or Bible story. It is for kids ages 4 through 5th grade and their families; older youth volunteer as station leaders. Messy Church begins in the Sanctuary with a short time of worship led by Pastor Jen, John Nothhaft and Evan Ayars. Stations take place in Fellowship Hall and include singing, crafts, games, building and story telling. Messy Church concludes with breakfast at 10:40 a.m.



BROOKSFIELD REFLECTS ON THE FIRST YEAR

As we complete our first year at Lewinsville, we are filled with a sense of accomplishment for all that we have achieved in establishing Brooksfield in our new home, as well as excitement for the future. This school year marks our 39th year of educating children in the McLean community. Every day, our students walk through our doors with an eagerness to learn, explore, and grow, and as educators, we are equally committed to nurturing that curiosity and joy.

Over the past year, we have seen the growth in our outdoor programs with our beautiful mud kitchen and the development of our natural playground. Brooksfield students have absolutely loved using the stage in the Fellowship Hall for performances including the production of Mary Poppins. We have also enjoyed several opportunities for collaboration with Lewinsville, including parent education programs, holiday celebrations, and music enrichment. In addition, we have built meaningful multigenerational relationships with the residents of LRR. These opportunities to connect across our shared community have enriched our program and strengthened the sense of belonging for our students and their families.

Brooksfield Summer Camp was a joyful success for everyone involved, campers, alumni, student counselors, and our dedicated year-round staff. The summer was filled with laughter, friendship, discovery, and fun.

As we look ahead, we are excited to begin a new school year filled with opportunities to continue growing, learning, and strengthening the relationships that make our community so special. We are grateful for the support of our families and community partners and look forward to another wonderful year together.



MUSIC MINISTRY

Overview of Music at Lewinsville

The Fall season promises to bring you a vibrant program of worship music and special programming. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to take part. **Lewinsville provides a fun and welcoming space where you can explore your interest in music and serve the mission of Lewinsville as well.** For **adults**, the **Chancel Choir** is a great place to begin. Sing for Sunday Services and events. All skill levels welcome. For **youth and children**, **Joyful Noise** teaches children ages three through Pre-K the basics of singing, music-making and helps them become familiar with sacred music. The **Lewinsville Choristers and Bells** is for youth in grades three through 12.

FALL SPECIAL MUSIC EVENTS



Sunday, October 18



Sunday, October 25

MUSIC STAFF

John Nothafft
Director of Music
703-356-7200, ext. 17
jnothafft@lewinsville.org

Evan Ayars
Children's Music Specialist
703-282-6699
evan@evanayars.com



FOR ADULTS

Chancel Choir

- You will sing for the Sunday services
- Rehearsals Thursday 7:30 - 9 p.m.

Chancel Bells

- Ring for services and special occasions
- Open to any adult
- Rehearsals Thursdays 2:30 - 4 p.m.

Lewinsville Cantorum

- For more experienced members of the Chancel Choir. If you love Renaissance, Baroque and even contemporary pieces
- Sing intermittently throughout the year



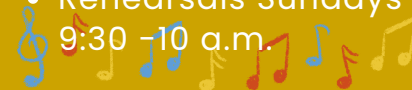
FOR YOUTH & CHILDREN

Junior Choristers and Bells (grades 1-5)

- The perfect place for a child to start.
- Rehearsals Sunday 4:30 - 6 p.m.

Joyful Noise (Ages 3-Pre-K)

- Children learn the basics of singing, music making and become familiar with Christian music
- Rehearsals Sundays 9:30 - 10 a.m.



WELCOME OUR PARISH ASSOCIATES

We have is some exciting news about three pastor-friends of Lewinsville, who are already part of our church family, becoming what are known as *Parish Associates* here at Lewinsville: Pastor Scott's spouse, Rev. Dr. Laura Cunningham; Pastor Layne's spouse, Rev. Crawford Brubaker; and Rev. Dan Thomas have been approved by the Session as Parish Associates.

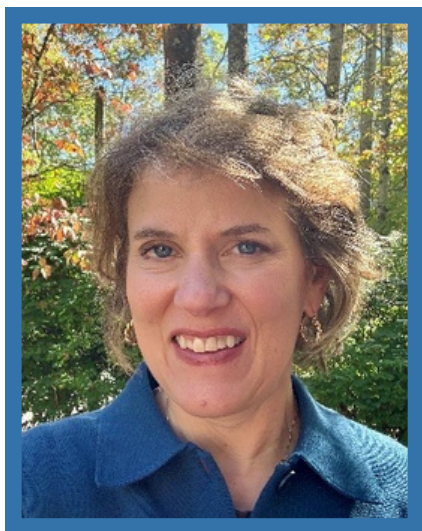
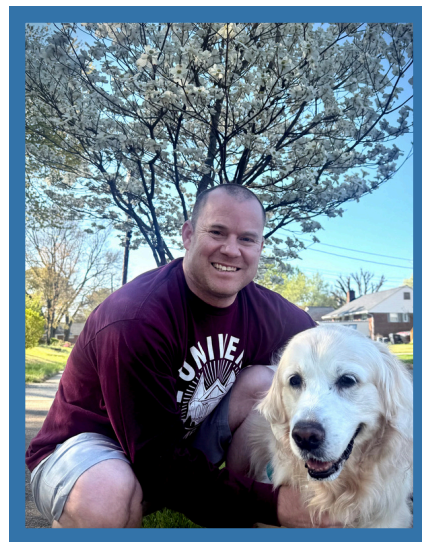
Parish associates are minister members of the presbytery who are either retired or serving in an at-large capacity in the presbytery, who have a formal connection with a particular local congregation. These are not paid staff positions (unless they are doing something out of the ordinary, like leading a retreat, in which case they could be given an appropriate honorarium). They are ways for ministers to have a formal relationship with a particular local congregation, to be involved in its life and ministry, supporting the ministry of the other pastors on the staff.

Lewinsville has a long history of Parish Associates in different roles over the years, and these new roles add to that history. We encourage you to welcome our new Parish Associates to these roles the next time you see them.

Rev. Crawford Brubaker serves as a hospice chaplain in Northern Virginia, where he has the privilege of accompanying patients and families through some of life's most sacred moments. In this role, he works on Sundays, which means that we don't get to see him as often here on Sunday morning.

Alongside his wife, Rev. Layne Brubaker, he has helped start New Worshipping Communities in New Orleans and in a women's prison in Washington State, reflecting his passion for creative ministry beyond traditional church walls.

When he's not at work, Crawford enjoys writing, spending time outdoors, and chasing after the Wild Goose, his golden retriever, and Revelation, his Cavalier King Charles Spaniel puppy.



Rev. Dr. Laura Cunningham (she/her) is an Arlingtonian and Minister-at-Large ("free range pastor") in National Capital Presbytery. For over twenty-five years, she has served congregations in DC, Maryland, Virginia and New York, most recently as pastor of Western Presbyterian Church in Foggy Bottom.

A graduate of Davidson College and Columbia Theological Seminary, she currently serves as a retreat and program leader for congregations and other groups. Laura's spirit is fed by hiking in the Shenandoah, exercising with friends and refinishing wood furniture.

She is married to Scott Ramsey, who pastors Lewinsville Presbyterian Church. They are proud parents of young adults Will and Ginny.

Rev. Dan Thomas is a career Associate Pastor whose ministry has predominately centered in Christian Education and Faith Formation.

He retired in 2015 after serving for 16 1/2 years as the Associate Pastor in Education and Nurture at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in McLean.

His passions in ministry have been teaching, Bible study, fellowship, and hospitality.

Dan enjoys reading mystery novels, stamp collecting, and gardening.



Meet the Senior Songsters who started their sing-alongs nearly 40 years ago. Members of the current group have been together between three and 15 years. They currently perform on Mondays at locations such as the Vierra Health, Chesterbrook Residences and Sunrise Bluemont in Arlington. Their schedule is filled, so they are not taking only additional appearances at the moment.

If you really want to see the Senior Songsters perform, there's one opportunity at Lewinsville— the Rocks of Ages meeting on September 25 at 11:30 a.m. Details are on page 10 of this newsletter. You can also contact Wendy Maiwurm or Bill Black to learn more about the Rocks of Ages meeting with the Senior Songsters.

Lewinsville

Presbyterian Church

1724 Chain Bridge Road
McLean, VA 22101

**Address sevice
requested.**

