

Love One Another

Easter Tide is upon us and this naturally raises questions like: What is it about this story that grabs us? And what is it that grabbed so many faithful people before us?

In Luke's account of Jesus' resurrection the women return from the tomb with the news the tomb is empty and Jesus is alive and his best friends and closest confidants don't believe the story. The same men who have committed three years of their lives to Jesus' teaching dismiss the story of these women as "an idle tale" or "useless talk."

Because the Greek word translated "useless talk" is only used once in the entire New Testament it presents a translation challenge. J.B. Phillips chose to use "sheer imagination" in his translation of the passage. The preeminent Greek Lexicon used by New Testament scholars offers an alternate suggestion of, "humbug", which in the present day vernacular might come out more like "junk" or "crap" or possibly even stronger language.

The point is this story of Jesus resurrection was *crazy talk* to the people in the best position to joyfully believe it. Even to them it wasn't reasonable to believe — at the first hearing and without proof. Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself and later Thomas would believe only after seeing and touching the resurrected Jesus.

So how is it that so many people in the first and second century came to believe, on faith alone, in the resurrection of Jesus and commit their lives to following him? Diana Butler Bass in her book, *A People's History of Christianity*, gives us a carefully researched answer to this question:

Christianity seems to have succeeded because it transformed the lives of people in a chaotic world. Indeed, in his study of the growth of Christianity in the ancient world, Rodney Stark suggests that

'The power of Christianity lay not in its promise of other worldly compensations for suffering in this life, as has so often been proposed. No, the crucial change that took place...was the rapidly spreading awareness of a faith that delivered potent antidotes to life's miseries here and now!'

Throughout the first five centuries people understood Christianity primarily as a way of life in the present, not as a doctrinal system, esoteric belief, or promise of eternal

Beloved, let us love
one another, because
love is from God;
everyone who loves is
born of God and
knows God.

1 John 4:7

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salvation. By followers enacting Jesus' teachings, Christianity changed and improved the lives of adherents and served as a practical spiritual pathway.*

The power of this story was in the resurrected lives of faithful Christians. They lived transformed lives and this was compelling testimony that many, rich and poor, were drawn to. Early writings from Christians and pagans attest to the radical lives of these believers.

“It is our care of the helpless, our practice of loving kindness that brands us in the eyes of our many opponents,” claimed the African theologian Tertullian. “‘Only look,’ they say, ‘look how they love one another!’”**

People actually followed Jesus. It was this reality that drew people to believe the wildly ridiculous story that even Jesus' closest friends couldn't believe without seeing. It is said that “seeing is believing.” In the early life of Christianity converts could see that those who called themselves Christians were different. Their care for the vulnerable and unprecedented acts of love were on display.

Two millennia have passed and this is still our story. We are still called to be people who live lives marked by the life and teachings of Jesus. The resurrection story is just an “idle tale” if it can't be seen in the lives of Christians.

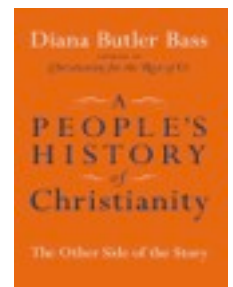
I can't help but wonder what our story will be at Lower Valley. Will we be a community that demonstrates the radical love and care that marked the lives of our thoroughly Christian ancestors? Can we learn to embrace the call of scripture to “love one another”? What will our story be?

Our history as a small rural church has no doubt been marked by the way we have cared for our congregation. As we change with the rapidly changing culture around us, we are called, once again, to find ways to “love one another.” How will we care for the members of our congregation and others in the community in the years to come? What does congregational care look like at this stage in history? We will be exploring together these questions and others that arise in the weeks ahead as we consider what it means to be resurrection people this Easter Tide.

**A People's History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story*, Diana Butler Bass; p. 26

**Bass, p. 64-65

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Evening Circle

The next meeting of the Women's Evening Circle will be held at **7 p.m., on Wednesday, April 17th, in the Getz Library.** We will be continuing the Bible study of the Presbyterian Women, using lesson six, "The Elders," based on 1 Peter 5. The author of the study, Nancy Benson-Nicol, has an interesting blog about the study, which you can read at <http://wpwpcusa.typepad.com/dispatches/2013/01/index.html>

Patty Wentz will be leading the lesson, and others may bring a small snack or dessert to share. If you bring your favorite mug from home, we won't have to do any dishes! Please join us for an informal evening of Bible study, interesting discussion, prayer, and fellowship. If you have questions, please call Joni Nodes at 236-7996 or Nancy Knight at 537-4347.

Open Cupboard Food Pantry

The Open Cupboard Food Pantry believes we have a responsibility to fill the very basic need for food for those in need.

The food pantry depends entirely on donations of groceries, personal care and cleaning items for the Pantry. Monetary donations allow them to buy perishables such as meat, produce and dairy products in addition to basic groceries as needed.

Currently the most needed items are:

- Beef soup or stew
- Pea soup
- SPAM
- Canned peas, carrots and potatoes
- Canned peaches, pears and applesauce
- Canned ravioli
- Elbow pasta
- 100% apple juice
- Coffee
- Toilet paper
- Laundry detergent

Parish Life Update

- There is a new sign up sheet in the Parish Hall for Coffee & Conversation as well as a new way of volunteering. Come help if you can and if you have any questions contact Lisa Coffaro at coffaro423@comcast.net or see her at church.
- The church picnic is Sunday, June 9th. Save the date — more info to come.

Liturgists Needed

We are looking for people to be a liturgist. The following dates are open: 5/26, 6/30, 7/28, 9/22, 10/13, 10/20, 10/27. No experience is necessary. If you are interested, please let Claudia know or speak with Pastor Chad.

Spiritual Formation of Children

The children of LVPC have been regularly participating in Family Worship at tables up front in the sanctuary. Each time they are asked to interpret the scripture with an open ended art creation. Adults are needed to help set up this activity, to supervise, and to clean up after worship. If you are interested in working with our children in this way, please contact Kim Rodgers. Take a moment after church on a Family Worship Sunday to see some of the talent and thoughtfulness displayed by our kids!

The Spiritual Formation Committee will host a breakfast on April 20, for this year's Sunday School teachers. We will discuss the year's progress, the curriculum, Pentecost and prayer. If anyone in the congregation is interested in joining the teaching staff in the fall as a teacher or a substitute, please contact Linda Stetler. We would love to have you learn more about Sunday School at

the breakfast retreat. Our enrollment continues to grow!

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School will be July 7 – 11, this summer. It is not too early to mark your calendar. The entire church, regardless of age, is invited to join in the fun and fellowship at VBS this year. As has been our custom, dinner will be served each night for everyone, followed by a themed fellowship and music. The children will break into groups for crafts, games and worship, while the adults will join together for a bible study each evening. Adults are needed to lead the crafts, games, and worship for **one** evening during the VBS week. This is a break from the routine of the past several years...years that have been very rewarding and enjoyable for all who participated. Take this opportunity to plan to join in this multigenerational experience. More information and sign ups will follow!

Spring Clean Up Day **Saturday, April 27**

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Building and Grounds Clean Up – we'll be raking, trimming bushes, planting, sweeping walkways, and cleaning windows. Please bring your favorite garden tools, rakes, shovels and a little elbow grease! Contact Warren Newman with questions.

**Join us for our next
Family Game Night
on Friday, April 26th!!**

**Save the Date!! On June 9th, we will have
worship outdoors at Califon Island Park.
Following worship, we will have our annual
church picnic. More details to follow...**

Session Members

Here is a list of our current session members and their phone numbers:

Lisa Coffaro: 832-0409

John Leddie: 537-9622

Stephanie Donlon: 537-2604

Lyn Magee: 832-2142

Wendy Garcia: 867-7186

Kim Rodgers: 832-0956

Terry Hoffman: 689-7646

Warren Newman: 638-4332

May Saxton (clerk): 537-4963

April 2013

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
	1 Adult Bell Practice: 7:15 p.m.	2 Sewing: 9:30 a.m., GL	3 The Channel: 7 p.m.	4	5 ASP Retreat: 4 p.m., PH	6 ASP Retreat ends 12 p.m.
7 Fellowship: 11 a.m. Celebration Chimes practice: 11:30-12 Joyful Noise practice: 12-12:30 Journey: 6-7:30	8 Adult Bell Practice: 7:15 p.m.	9 Sewing: 9:30 a.m., GL	10 The Channel: 7 p.m.	11	12	13 Community Garden Orientation: 9 a.m. in the garden
14 Fellowship: 11 a.m. Celebration Chimes practice: 11:30-12 Joyful Noise practice: 12-12:30 Journey: 6-7:30	15 Adult Bell Practice: 7:15 p.m.	16 Sewing: 9:30 a.m., GL Session: 7 p.m.	17 NO CHANNEL Evening Circle: 7 p.m.	18	19	20 Sunday School Teacher Retreat: 8 a.m. - noon Boy Scout Car Wash: 12:30-3:30
21 Fellowship: 11 a.m. Celebration Chimes practice: 11:30-12 Joyful Noise practice: 12-12:30 Journey: 6-7:30	22	23 Sewing: 9:30 a.m., GL	24 The Channel: 7 p.m.	25	26 Game Night: 5 p.m.	27 Spring Clean- Up Day: 8 a.m. - noon
28 Fellowship: 11 a.m. Celebration Chimes practice: 11:30-12 Joyful Noise practice: 12-12:30 Journey: 6-7:30	29 Adult Bell Practice: 7:15 p.m.	30 Sewing: 9:30 a.m., GL				

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers	Fellowship Host(s)
April 7	Warren Newman	Renee and Jeff Ollerenshaw	Kim Rodgers Ed Getz Terry Hoffman Judy Eckwielen	Newman Axelsen Rodgers
April 14	Nancy Knight	Ed Getz Madeleine Argue		Wilson O'Keefe Garcia
April 21	Judy Eckwielen	Janet and Gary Kipp	Children's Message: Kyle Garcia	Newman Rodgers Harris
April 28 Family Worship	Kim Rodgers	Linda Stetler Terry Hoffman		Burt McKinnon
May 5	Sue Huntington	Judie and Adam Ambielli		
May 12	Stephanie Donlon	Donna and John Leddie		
May 19	Joni Nodes	Judy Eckwielen Eleanor Raposo	Children's Message: Tracy Heuneman	
May 26 Family Worship	TBD	Linda Stetler Terry Hoffman		

If you are able to serve in one of the TBD spots, please let Claudia in the office know. Thanks!

April 2013

**Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830**

The Vision of our Church

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church is a community of believers who worship God in word and deed, nurture each other through prayer, friendship, and education, and seek to serve others in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Our four areas of ministry are faith development, caring for each other, outreach ministry and supporting ministry.