

Parish Happenings

April 2017

FROM PASTOR CHAD

Be the Best Neighbors: *Loving and Shaping Your World Well*

We've come to the sixth and final core commitment that churches need to grow young and, honestly, this one should come as no surprise. Jesus made it pretty clear that anyone following him should be focused on their *neighbor* when he gave two answers to the question "which is the greatest commandment?" Or as the authors of *Growing Young* put it, "For Jesus, love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable." (GY, p. 239) If we're going to be a church that loves God then we've got to be good at loving our neighbors. Making this a habit makes us the kind of community young people want to be part of.

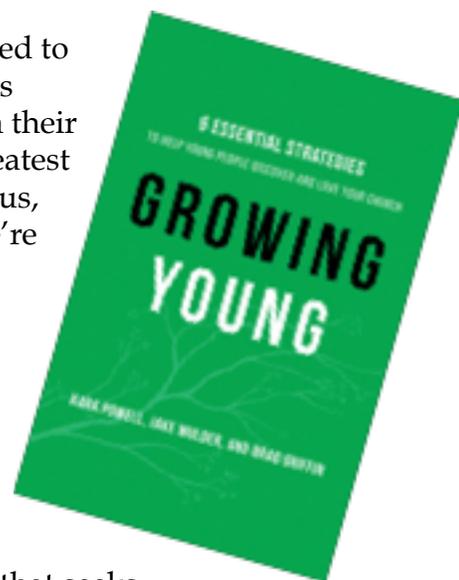
The idea of loving our neighbor may seem to be a straight forward concept, but as Jesus pointed out in his story about the Samaritan going the extra mile, it can be difficult. Identifying, serving, and loving our *neighbors* may be harder and messier than simply giving lip service to the idea. However, if we are going to be a church growing young we've got to live into our calling to be a community that seeks to apply the gospel in practical ways.

Churches loving and shaping their world well are churches that engage the culture around them by continually asking, "who is my neighbor?"

Churches that grow young practice this [selfless] mercy in a myriad of forms – in their service and social justice efforts, in their political engagement, in discussions about race and ethnic identity, and in response to pop culture. Doing so earns these churches a hearing in a culture that often otherwise dismisses them as judgmental or closed-minded. (GY, p. 240)

Again and again young people responding to researchers described their church as a place where "informed, respectful, and thoughtful dialogue" was emphasized and encouraged. It would seem that it is more important to talk about what we are for than what we are against. Opening up hospitable dialogue and relationship with our neighbors, even in cases where we may strongly disagree, is a very appealing characteristic. The authors suggest that churches with this ability are taking Psalm 24:1 to heart, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it."

Being neighborly is also accomplished through demonstrating compassion through acts of service. Churches growing young consistently point to the outward oriented activities they engage in as a key to effectiveness with young people.



Finally, two kinds of diversity were another common characteristic of churches embracing their neighbors: 1) the diversity of ideas and “commitment to informed, respectful, and thoughtful dialogue.” 2) “embracing ethnic diversity”.

I also found the warning, in this chapter, to avoid the four following pitfalls instructive and worth some reflection time:

Aiming For Perfection

Young people don't expect their church to be perfect at interacting with cultural and societal issues, but they highly value an emphasis on these things. So, while being good neighbors isn't easy it is important that this remains an emphasis in our teaching and action.

Copying and Competing

Authenticity is valued highly by young people and churches growing young neither copy the culture around them or try to compete with the entertainment industry. Trying too hard to be relevant is more likely to invite skepticism than engagement from young people.

Condemning and Critiquing

This is better off used sparingly as young people have a pretty good idea what churches are against. Instead it is more effective to listen and respond to the

community with an attentiveness to the unique contributions we as Christian community can make.

Finding the One “Right” Program, Cause, or Social Justice Issue

How churches growing young serve is varied and very different from one to the next. What is more important is their general commitment to serving. Finding the right cause is not important, but tapping into the passions of the congregation and community is. Listening to our own people and letting things bubble up from among us.

It may feel a little overwhelming to consider all the ways we could take action and be super neighbors. However, I'd like to suggest that there are several ways we are already on this road. Of course we can always improve, but in rereading this chapter for this summary I was struck by several ways we are already taking on the challenge of *loving and shaping our world well*.

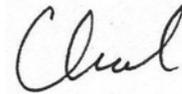
Several of the following were almost exactly what was being suggested in this chapter of Growing Young:

- Conversations on faith and politics
- Mission Committee screening of 13th (as a way of finding our

passion and understanding our *neighbor*)

- The Giving Fair (coming up on 14 years)
- Local families and projects supported by our Christmas Tree Sale
- Student trip to Appalachia with Appalachia Service Project
- Our High School curriculum “Can I Ask That”

May we continually be looking, listening, learning about, and longing to love our neighbors well.



EVENING CIRCLE

Women's Evening Circle Bible Study will be held on Wednesday, April 19th at 7:00 p.m. in the Getz Library. We will continue with our new study from the PW/Horizons Bible Study titled “Who is Jesus? What a Difference a Lens Makes” by Judy Yates Siker. The Author invites us to join her “on a journey to expand our understanding of who Jesus was and is -- a journey of our hearts and minds, a journey that we will take together. Please join us in this journey. Any questions please call Nancy Knight 537-4347 or Joni Nodes 391-6263.

Holy Week Schedule

Maundy Thursday (4/13)

Communion Service at 7 p.m. in the parish hall

Good Friday (4/14)

Sanctuary open from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. for prayer and reflection
Living Stations of the Cross at St. John Neumann Parish in
Califon at 1 p.m.

Easter Sunday (4/16)

Sunrise Service at 6:30 a.m. with fellowship
following in the parish hall
Family worship at 10 a.m. with fellowship
following in the parish hall

“FAITH AND POLITICS”

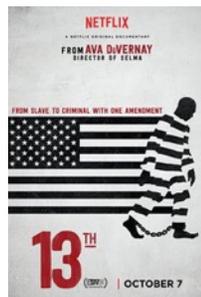
It is never too late to join us for our continuing conversations exploring the intersection between faith and politics. We began with scripture, specifically the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7, and discussed what we as Christians are called to stand for in our world. Building on that foundation we discussed how we get our news, what sources inform us, and how we approach any given political topic. We will begin moving toward specific issues that the group is passionate about in future discussions. Of highest importance will be the emphasis on respect so we can create an environment where honest questions can be asked, with the ultimate goal being to draw us as a Christian community closer to the

heart of God and communicate that to our community and world. **We will continue meeting every 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month from 11:45-12 and ending at 1:00.**

MISSION NEWS

Film Series Update

We showed “13th” on March 26th. We had a wonderful turnout and an interesting discussion afterwards. To continue our series and to help educate ourselves about issues affecting our neighbors, we are having a screening of “Homeless In Hunterdon” on Friday, May 5th at 7 p.m. We hope to have a representative from Family Promise of Hunterdon County joining us. Please consider participating in this event.



The film is thirty minutes in length and chips, salsa and guacamole will be provided!

2016 Christmas Tree Sale Disbursement

The Mission Team decided to give the balance of our profits from the Christmas Tree sale to a local Hampton family in need. We gave \$2,537.50. The church received a lovely thank you letter from the family. They were very appreciative. It is on the bulletin board in the hallway. Thank you to everyone again for your support of the annual sale!

APPALACHIA SERVICE PROJECT (ASP) HAPPENINGS

ASP Work Trip

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church is preparing to send 30 Appalachia Service Project



volunteers to Kentucky on July 15th! We are excited -- last year we sent 17. Our adults and youth will come together with volunteers from 6 other churches in the BYG (Big Youth Group) to help make homes warmer, safer, and drier. Many who have participated in this mission opportunity have called it “life changing,” both for the volunteers and those who receive help. There will be a variety of chances for our congregation to be a part of

this work. We participate in the project by generously supporting the group financially every year, and with our prayers. We would like to thank all of the people who have made soup and bought it over the past few months. All of that money (\$765) will go toward our trip expenses.

On April 9th, volunteers will be **MEETING** after church at 11:30 in the Getz Library. We will discuss the trip and talk about ways to raise funds. We will also take a group photo for a new prayer card, so we need everyone there!

The first way that our church members can help support this amazing work trip is through a **CLOTHING DRIVE**. Take your wearable and usable clothing, accessories, linens, stuffed animals and other small toys to the Community Presbyterian Church on April 22nd, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Our thirty volunteers and their families can also help collect clothing that day to earn money toward their trip. (Contact Christy or Ed Hemmes at BYGworkcamp@gmail.com)

Lower Valley will also be hosting a **COFFEE HOUSE** on Sunday, April 30th from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. We will be joining with members of Fairmount Presbyterian Church to bring



you an evening of fun and refreshments, raising money for the ASP trip. The evening is open to the public so please bring friends! Tickets will be \$10 each, and we are also looking for people with talents to share. Please contact Lora Harris at loratod@comcast.net or at 908.763.1946.

On May 7th (rain date May 21st), we will have a **CAR WASH** in our back parking lot after church! We urge all of our members to take part in this fund raiser before you leave that day. Meet additional volunteers from Chester Community Presbyterian Church and other BYG churches, and experience first-hand the enthusiastic work done by our adults and youth.



PRAYER CARDS will be available soon, and this the way that many from our church can be a part of the trip. Cards will be \$10 to sponsor a volunteer, and they will feature a group photo and prayer requests. The card can remind you to pray for our volunteers before the trip, while they travel to Appalachia, and from July 15th - 22nd while they work. We urge you to continue your generous support by donating as much as you can to this huge undertaking.

Please mark your calendars now with all of these dates and know that your participation makes a difference in many lives!

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Spiritual Formation of Children

The 4/5 Sunday school class led the worship service on March 19. The children did a wonderful job, while becoming more familiar with the different parts of the service. Many learned that the numbers in front on the board by the organist are actually the hymn numbers, and others learned that the entrance to the church is called the narthex. Thanks so much to all those who participated. (see page 6 for a few photos).

Keep in mind that the GiFT program will be July 9 - 13, in the evening. The program is for everyone: seniors, parents, teens and kids. Child care will be provided for little ones. Dinner will be served each evening following by fellowship, faith exploration and fun. Mark your calendars.

Scholarships are available for kids who would like to attend Camp Johnsonburg this summer. Through the years many from our church have enjoyed camp. Listen for announcements in church or talk with Pastor Chad about signing up for this summer.

It is never too early to think about Christmas. If you would like to be involved with the costumes for the Christmas play, please contact Linda Stetler. This summer, costumes need to be laundered, labeled and repaired in preparation for the next play!

The spring Sunday School Teacher retreat will be May 20, from 9 to noon. Teachers and substitutes, mark this on your calendars. If anyone is interested in teaching next fall, please contact Kim Rodgers, Natalie Gast or Linda Stetler. We'd love to have you join our staff and our brunch on May 20.

Men's Bible Study

It's always a great time to join our Men's Fellowship Group! We are pausing in Chapter 15 in the Gospel of Luke and are reading *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. We meet on Saturday mornings from 8-9:30 a.m. If you have questions, are interested, have questions or would like a study guide see Pastor Chad.

Youth Group

High school students...Join us on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month as we spend time looking at issues of faith through scripture and discussion in order to dive deeper into what it means to have a relationship with God.

Yummy dessert and lots of laughs are always included. We meet at 7 p.m. at either the Rodgers or the Gasts. Feel free to invite friends. **Our April meeting dates are 4/7 and 4/21.**

We are looking for church members (of any age) who would like to contribute something to our newsletter. Share your experiences, your memories and your hopes for LVPC. We want to hear from you. E-mail Claudia at lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com.

Easter Flower Order Form

(orders are due with payment by 4/9)

If you would like to order Easter Flowers to decorate our sanctuary, please fill out the order form below and drop it in the offering plate or send it to the church office. Prices listed below include foil. Please indicate the desired quantity and enclose payment with your order.

Name: _____

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Flower	Price	Qty	Total Cost
Mini Daffodil	\$2.85	_____	_____
Daffodil (6")	\$5.90	_____	_____
Easter Lily (4-5 blooms)	\$8.90	_____	_____
Tulip (6 blooms)	\$5.65	_____	_____
Tulip (8 blooms)	\$9.00	_____	_____

Thanks to our 4/5 graders who led worship on March 19th!!



Pastor Chad's Contact info:

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Church Info:

Claudia Gilbert: Church Administrator

Phone: 908-832-2933

E-mail: lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com

Website: www.lowervalley.org

Office hours: W-F, 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Session Members

Lisamarie Boehm: 432-3414/lisamarie_boehm@yahoo.com

Abby Ernst: 439-3549/abigailernst@gmail.com

Kyle Garcia: 867-7186/ kylesgarcia@yahoo.com

Sue Hostler: 574-5337/JSHostler@gmail.com

Warren Newman: 638-4332/newmanwj@cdmsmith.com

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Kim Rodgers: 892-0141/chadandkimrodgers@gmail.com

Karen Newman (clerk): 638-4332/karennewman@embarqmail.com

Ashes

Seasonal worship, out of the normal one in seven lockstep
An evening gathering with seldom seen denomination neighbors
Polite perfunctory greetings while heading to self-assigned pew
A “*sit with us*” cry from mission activity friends from the “other” church.
Well... yes, O.K.
Yes indeed.

A trio of pastors planning and leading worship designed to dislodge
Thoughts of shopping lists, online activity, and work due tomorrow
Godly worship, in God’s world in the present tense
Gathered in a place accepting
Casual clothes, soft noises from a newly weaned puppy, machine gun clatter from radiators
mounted on fraying carpet, ignored miscues from pastors and worshipers
Seeking
God’s world in our world
Everyday

Matthew’s text on privacy and righteousness while fasting, giving, praying
Pastoral words on sinful fasting
Silent confession, foreboding thoughts of future temptations
And,
The delicious irony of perhaps thwarting the Word immediately
“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them”.
Of course we Calvinists anoint our brows with ashes under the cover of darkness
Unlike the other sects that worship early on this special day and furl the symbol on their
forehead all day long.
A washable sign of faithfulness

The congregational art project of ashes and the triumphant cross
Collectively accomplished, with a reward for not always keeping within the lines
Torn masking tape, a striking white cross revealed
Suitable for daily home reflection and worship
There are lessons there.

The young pastor affixed the cross of ashes on my brow
And whispered the words “Dust to Dust”
So funereal and frightening at first
Jesus’ death? My death?
Yes
God’s creation out of dust, returning to dust, ashes evoking our repentance and death
But also a promise of a new life forever through Jesus Christ

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
April 2	Warren Newman	Lisa Coffaro Isabel Roppolo	Wendy Garcia Warren Newman Stephanie Donlon Lisa Coffaro
April 9 — Palm Sunday	Dick Kline	Nancy and David Knight	
April 16 — Easter Family Worship	OPEN	Karen and Warren Newman	
April 23	Christina Wilson	Daryl Minch Judy Eckwielen	
April 30	Stephanie Donlon	Rich Ehrlich Ed Getz	
May 7	Judy Eckwielen	Renee and Jeff Ollerenshaw	Wendy Garcia Warren Newman OPEN OPEN
May 14	John Leddie	The El-Zahr Family	
May 21	Nancy Knight	Abby and Ken Ernst	
May 28 — Family Worship	Lisamarie Boehm	The Rodgers Family	

**Please let the office know if you
are able to serve in one of the
OPEN spots**

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830
April 2017

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.