

From Pastor Chad

Advent: A Time of Waiting and Expectation

The season of Advent begins liturgically by looking forward to a second Advent when Christ will return and the world will be judged by God. It is a rather ominous beginning to a season that ends with the birth of a baby. Yet, there is wisdom in a tradition that challenges us to live expectantly.

The Gospel reading for the first Sunday this year is from Matthew 24. It assures us that there is no knowing when Christ will return, but also that there is no knowing who are or are not true believers. Throughout Matthew's gospel there are passages that emphasize insiders and outsiders, but never is there a code for us to use to determine who is in and who is out: it is always God's job to do the judging.

Matthew is consistent in delivering the message that the element of surprise is an invitation to be prepared and suspend our worries about dividing people until a time when God will take care of everything. In the meantime we are to be about the work of God as demonstrated and taught by Jesus.

It is tempting to think that our gift buying binges, wrapping frenzies, and Christmas parties are a good metaphor for the season celebrated by the Church each December. Scripture does challenge us not simply to idly wait for the second Advent. However, I've come to the conclusion that the Christian life is nothing like our 21st century Christmas preparations.

Firstly, our waiting is extremely temporary, we know what day all of our frenzied gift-related activities will come to an end (depending on how much of a procrastinator you are — the end is either the 24th or in the wee morning hours of the 25th.) But, the end of the world as we know it, is not known to anyone in heaven or on earth. We aren't called to live in a frenzied rush, but with a healthy rhythm of work and Sabbath, prayer and reflection, and concern and care for our neighbor.

Second, our present sense of expectation is rooted in consumerism. Children learn early on that Christmas is about expecting to open gifts. What is the most common question any stranger or well meaning family member always asks my children? "So, what do you want for Christmas?" Oh, sure, we can hope that we are teaching them a sense of expectation around giving and the joy it can bring, but let's be honest, it is overrun by the expectations around what one will receive. Instead, our expectation during Advent is based on the hope of a world set right — a world shaped by God's peace.

But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father... Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

(Matthew 24:36 and 44)

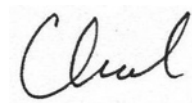
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Beginning Advent with Matthew 24 focuses our waiting and expectation properly on living in God's kingdom now. It forces us to consider God's call to active preparation: bringing water to the thirsty, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoner, reconciling broken relationships, and loving at all cost.

What will this sort of Advent waiting and expectation mean for you and your family this year? What are some new ways you can be about God's business? What traditions can you ditch in favor of being about God's business?

I hope your family will try out the practice of the Jesse Tree this Advent. It is a wonderful way of rooting this Advent message of active waiting and expectation in God's story as we have learned it through the bible. If you missed the Advent workshop on November 30th it is not to

late to get the readings from me and if you want to know more about having a Jesse Tree in your home you can see my November article.



Thank You from Janet Dixon

Thanks so much to my wonderful church family for all the cards, call and great support you gave me these last difficult months. Thanks to Pastor Chad for the beautiful service. Thanks to all who helped with the wonderful lunch I'm truly blessed with a wonderful family, great friends and my church family too. God bless.
— Janet Dixon

Monthly Calendar

Due to lack of space in the newsletter, the monthly church calendar can be found on the church website:
www.lowervalley.org.

Newsletter Options

Please help us save on postage and copier paper costs by receiving the newsletter via e-mail. Also, by receiving an e-mail version, you will be able to enjoy all our photos in color! If you are interested please e-mail Claudia at:

lowervalleypc@embarqmail.com.

The newsletter can also be viewed on our webpage:
www.lowervalley.org.

Last Chance for the Church Directory

Please take a few minutes to look over the copy of the directory in the Parish House on the "sign up" table and make any changes that are needed. We will distribute an updated version in the next week or so. Also, we are missing photos for many of you, so please e-mail or drop off a photo to the church office. **This is your last notice to get your info and photo in.**

Soup for Sale!

Beginning the first Sunday of December and going until the end of March we will be holding our Soup Sale to benefit our ASP volunteers' expenses and work in Tennessee this July. Please help support this wonderful program to make homes safe, warm and dry for our neighbors in Appalachia.

Children's Ministry

Lines are being memorized, costumes are being fitted, and children are

being transformed into shepherds, and kings, and angels! Yes, the Christmas play is under way. Our children are excited about presenting the Christmas message on Sunday, December 22nd, during morning worship. After the pageant, there will be a luncheon served in the Parish Hall. Mark the date on your calendar and join us.

Ahhh, but as they are preparing their part for worship, the children are learning about the Advent Season. On Saturday evening, November 30th, at 6:30 p.m. there will be an Advent workshop in the Parish Hall for all ages. Bring a dessert to share and join in as Pastor Chad guides us in the tradition of the Jesse Tree. The Jesse Tree is a unique Advent custom which teaches about the Bible and reminds us to keep Christ at the center of Christmas.

All is well with our children. The many opportunities at LVPC are in full swing. Children are enjoying Sunday School classes, Family Worship, and helping out at Coffee Hour.

The Channel is taking a look at the Book of Acts on Wednesday evenings, and the Journey is meeting at the Rodgers on Sunday evenings to discuss faith and faith practices. It is never too late to join these active groups.

The BRAB group **(Building Relationships** **Around Books)**

We are a group of ladies that meet in the evening on the 1st Monday of each month. We enjoy snacks & wine while having an informal & lively discussion on member-chosen books. For more info, please contact Kim Rodgers at chadandkimrodgers@gmail.com.

The Califon Moms

Moms with young children get together weekly to talk, support each other & let the kids interact/play. We usually meet in the mornings one day a week at parks or one another's homes. This group was started by a few ladies at LVPC, but has branched out to include other moms in the Califon area. If you'd like to join us, contact Natalie Gast at gast.natalie@gmail.com.

Join us for Fellowship!

Come and get to know your church family at Coffee & Conversation every Sunday after service in the Parish Hall. Eat, talk and let your kids have fun. Help support this fun time by sharing the load. Set up, bake, bring a favorite dish or help clean up. Sign up at the table in the Parish Hall.

Evening Circle

The next meeting of the Women's Evening Circle will be **Wed., December 18th, at 7 p.m.**, in the Getz Library at the church. We will continue with our new Bible study, **An Abiding Hope: The Presence of God in Exodus and Deuteronomy**, by Janice Catron, for Presbyterian Women. Joni Nodes will lead Lesson 2, "God's Call to Serve," which is based on Exodus 2:11-4:17. The key idea of this study is that just as God called Moses despite his hesitation, we too are called to service even though we may feel inadequate. God's promise to Moses is also to us: "I will be with you." (Ex. 3:12) Please join us for an informal evening of study, fellowship, prayer, and light refreshments.

Feel free to bring a snack to share. For more information, you may call Nancy Knight (537-4347) or Joni Nodes (236-7996).

Christmas Play Rehearsal Schedule

We will be holding rehearsals for the play on the following dates:

Sunday, 12/1 —

11:30-1:00

Practice for those who have lines, costume sizing for those who don't have lines

Saturday, 12/7 —

11:30-1:00

Practice for those who have lines

Sunday, 12/15 —

11:30-1:00

Practice for **all** kids involved in the play

Saturday, 12/21 —

9:00-1:00

Dress Rehearsal for those with lines

11:00-1:00

Dress Rehearsal for those without lines

Sunday, 12/22 —

9:00

Arrive and put on costumes

10:00

Lead worship through performance of the Christmas Play.

If you have any questions about the play, please contact Kim Rodgers at chadandkimrodgers@gmail.com, or by phone at 892-0141.

From the Stewardship Committee

We'd like to remind everyone how important it is to consider the pledge drive letter you received and return your completed pledge card ASAP. Your pledges help us plan next year's budget. Our gifts not only fund the work of our church, but challenge us to live with a focus beyond ourselves.

Alternative Gift Fair

Recap

Thank you to all who worked so hard to make this year's Alternative Gift Fair a success! We are still accepting shopping lists until December 8th, so if you couldn't attend, mail yours to the church office or bring it to church. We will mail or give you the cards. So far we have collected about \$13,000 in donations for the 12 organizations! We could definitely reach or surpass last year's record of over \$15,000, so please continue to pass the word. The AGF has greatly

increased the mission giving of our church over the 11 years we have held it. It is also a way to showcase our caring church community to our surrounding neighbors, who can join with us in reaching out to others. This event is a wonderful example of what we can accomplish when we all work together — it is truly a team effort. Thank you to **everyone** who planned, set up, decorated, made soup and desserts, worked in the kitchen, greeted shoppers, collected money, gave out cards, helped with SERRV, donated, shopped, and cleaned up! The great new cards were the result of Karen Newman's artistic eye and expertise on the computer, and Claudia Gilbert spent many hours publicizing, copying, and pulling things together. Lyn Magee researched and implemented credit card processing, taking us further into the digital age! Thank you to all, and praise God for answering our prayers!

Alternative Gift Fair — 2013



Ushers and Liturgist Sign-up

The office is currently working on a schedule of 2014 ushers and liturgists. The goal is to create a year-long schedule giving us the assurance that someone will be there to help and giving you the flexibility of arranging for your own substitute when your schedule demands it. Help us by filling out this form and dropping it in the offering plate or sending it to the office. Thanks!

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone Number: _____

I'm willing to serve as:

Liturgist once a month

Liturgist once every 8 weeks

Liturgist once a quarter

Usher once a month

Usher once every 8 weeks

Usher once a quarter

Other _____

Restrictions (i.e., can't serve in winter months, only available 2nd Sunday of month, etc.)

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers	Fellowship Host(s)
December 1	Dick Kline	Cindy and Tim O'Keefe	Terry Hoffman Linda Stetler Sue Huntington Sally Zeiner-Morrish	Stetler, O'Keefe, El-Zahr
December 8	Nancy Knight	Janet and Gary Kipp		Garcia, Donlon
December 15	Stephanie Donlon	Marilyn and Al El-Zahr		Rodgers
December 22	Judy Eckwielen	Lisa and Chris Coffaro		Parish Life
December 24 4:30 p.m.				
December 24 7:30 p.m.	Robbie Axelsen	Karen Newman Rick Ehrlich		
December 29 Family Worship	May Saxton	Stephanie and Jeff Donlon		Saxton, O'Keefe

Art Table Schedule for Family Worship

12/29: Jennifer Wysocki

1/19: Stephanie Donlon

2/16: Renee Ollerenshaw

3/16: Isabel Roppolo and Lisa Coffaro

4/20: Kim Rodgers, Natalie Gast and Linda Stetler

5/25: Donna and Erika Leddie

December 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.