

Parish Happenings

February 2022

FROM PASTOR CHAD

Truing The Wheel of Our Lives

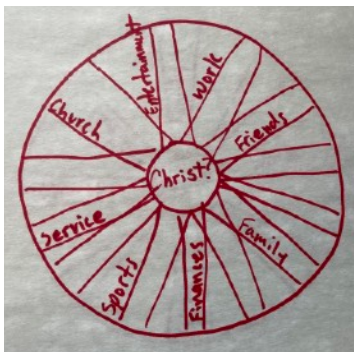
I want to be clear that as I write about emerging from this nearly 2 years long pandemic I do so with cautious optimism. I've tried at different times in my life to be cynical and found it wanting, so for now, I'll stick with hopefulness.

A couple Sundays ago I used a bicycle wheel as a metaphor for our life together in community. I think the wheel metaphor works pretty well for our life together as the church as well as for our individual lives as disciples. Of course, our individual

discipleship includes being part of Christ's community, but we can use a bicycle wheel as a guiding image for both because in each case the hub that holds everything together is Christ.

Bicycle wheels are pretty amazing pieces of art and engineering. They are durable and fragile at the same time. We can own a bike for years without paying any attention to the maintenance of the wheels, but if something affects the trueness of a wheel the whole performance of the bike affected. I mentioned too that when a wheel is out of true it is no easy task to get the spokes properly tensioned and balanced. It takes a mechanic with experience and the proper tools to true a wheel and at times the job seems as much art as mechanics.

I started a conversation with our high school students about this bicycle wheel metaphor and I've been wondering if it might not be helpful to all of us as we emerge from this pandemic. We were thrust into the reality of a pandemic with out a chance for proper planning, preparation, or reflection. However, as we slowly emerge from it, I'd bet our wheels need some truing. A bit of patient work on balancing our lives is probably in order. There's a pretty good chance our Netflix binge watching has become as spoke getting too much attention. We might even need to ask ourselves if by chance we replaced Christ with some lesser hub.



We've learned some things about ourselves during pandemic time. I'm fairly certain most of us did learn that we are more prone to binge watching the latest show that drops on our streaming platform of choice than we thought. But, we do well to reflect in some deeper way on what has been exposed in these last 22 months. What has and hasn't seen us through the periods of isolation? How often in these challenging days have we turned to prayer or a neighbor, or our church community for support? How were the different parts of our lives distributed around the wheel when this whole thing started? Did that change? What is honestly the hub and is what we've chosen capable of holding the whole thing together? I asked our students to draw two pictures of a wheel: the first to reflect the way their lives look right now and the second how they might like it to

look. My hope is that we all might move our lives closer to accepting the power of that great passage in Colossians 1:17-20.



He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

He was supreme in the beginning and –leading the resurrection parade – he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe – people and things, animals and atoms – get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the Cross. (*The Message*)

As we move with optimism and hope into a changed, but more familiar way of living I invite us to pause for self, family, and community examination of what we are counting on to be the hub and to see if each spoke is properly tensioned. I am aware that getting everything properly tensioned is more an art or a practice than a once in a while mechanical fix, yet, the whole practice is easier when Christ is placed at the center. For some of us this may mean major reorganization and a renewed look at the life of Jesus as we emerge from our cocoons.



ASH WEDNESDAY

We will begin the season of Lent with a worship service and the imposition of ashes on March 2 at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary.

ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Women's Bible study: For more information, please contact Kim Rodgers.

Men's Fellowship: There's plenty of bible study, but that's not all. Join us virtually on Saturdays at 8 a.m. We share life and wrestle with scripture together. At the present we're spending time in 1 Corinthians. Contact Chad with any questions to get the zoom link.

PRAYER CHAIN

Reminder! The church maintains a virtual prayer chain. If you would like to be informed about those in need of prayers, and are willing to commit to prayerfully participate, please contact Krista Jenkins at kjenkins1970@gmail.com. Prayer requests can also go to Krista.

FROM FINANCE TEAM

Per Capital: What's that? One item in our budget which never receives much attention is our Per Capita expense. This is a fixed dollar amount, \$40 per member in 2022, which we pay to our presbytery each year. But what is Per Capita and what is this money used for? Our presbytery describes it as follows:

"In general, it is one of the main ways we live out who we are as Presbyterians. We are a connectional church, and the Per Capita allows us to pool our resources to do many more ministries, missions and programs than any church could possibly do on its own. These dollars are part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together, and allows us to work not only with other Presbyterian churches in our presbytery, but also in our Synod region (the northeast), across the country, and in partnership with other Christian churches around the world. It is how we covenant together to be the larger presence of the church."

Each year we ask our members to pay their portion of Per Capita, but we usually fall short. Our church's Per Capita this year is \$5,080. If you are able, we would appreciate it if you would forward your Per Capita payment to the church office or drop it in the offering plate during worship. Just mark the payment "Per Capita" and we will make sure it is included on your Giving Receipt. You may also pay your Per Capita through our online giving program by submitting it to the General Fund and including a note indicating it is your Per Capita payment. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Claudia in the church office. Thank you!

Counters: We're back in person for worship and we are looking for a few willing folk to lend a hand in counting the offering and preparing a deposit to the bank. This is a rather simple (and more streamlined than ever before) process. Plenty of on the job training. We promise.

Online Giving Update: Our online giving program is administered by the Presbyterian Foundation in collaboration with Vanco Payment Solutions. You can participate in online giving through the Giving link on our website or directly from your smartphone through an app. Vanco has recently converted from the current GivePlus mobile app to the new Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement app, which will offer functionality similar to the GivePlus app. How does this change affect you? If you have been donating through our website or have set up a recurring donation through our website or the GivePlus app, you do not need to do anything. If you have been donating through the GivePlus app and would like to continue, or you would like to start donating through the app, you will need to:

- download the Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement app on your smartphone;
- search for Lower Valley Presbyterian Church, Califon NJ or use the special invitation code BS2JBU;
- log into the app with the same login and password you used in GivePlus, or if you are a new user, create an account.

You can then donate, review and track your donations directly from your smartphone.

If you have any questions regarding online giving or need help setting up an account through our website or the new app, please contact Karen Newman at kjnewman115@gmail.com or 908-763-9483.

Contribution Statements: All 2021 year end contribution statements have been sent out. The new accounting software which we started using last year has streamlined the process of tracking and reporting offerings and pledges. It has also enabled us to email statements instead of mailing paper copies. We have seen quite a savings in manpower and money and are pleased with the results. If you received your year end statement by email and would like to receive a paper copy, please contact Karen Newman at kjnewman115@gmail.com or 908-763-9483. If you would prefer to receive a paper statement throughout the year instead of an emailed statement, please also let Karen know that and she will update your record with that information.

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
February 6	Mike Reaves	Karen and Warren Newman	Karen and Warren Newman
February 13	Karen Newman	Abby and Ken Ernst	
February 20	Laurie Granieri	Anne Cooley and Linda Stetler	
February 27	Jeb Edwards	Marilyn and Al El-Zahr	
March 6	Marilyn El-Zahr	Karen and Warren Newman	OPEN and OPEN
March 13	Warren Newman	Mike Reaves and Madeleine Argue	
March 20	Karen Newman	Peggy Macaoay and Krista Jenkins	
March 27	Judy Eckwielen	Lisamarie Boehm and Renee Ollerenshaw	

February 2022
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.