

# Parish Happenings

## February 2023

### FROM PASTOR CHAD

#### Discernment



**D**iscernment has been on my mind for the past couple months. As my youngest child has started hearing back from colleges, my oldest prepares to graduate from college, and our church emerges from a pandemic how do we know what choices to make at this crucial moment?

There is of course the *tried and true* method of making a pro and con list. If you are choosing a college from among several opportunities, for example, you might draw up two columns (labeled *pro* and *con*) for each school and then start listing attributes. Then you take a step back and start weighing what you see on the paper. How important is warm weather and a great campus if your debt load will be unrealistic, etc. I've employed such lists fairly often when facing big decisions.

However, there are more intuitive ways to make big decisions. Some of us are more inclined to simply 'go with our gut'. I have always approached discernment more through intuition than with rational procedures. I try to be

practical, but open to how fear and discomfort are influencing me. Of course sometimes those things are internal warnings that protect us and sometimes they hold us back – so, how are we to know when to listen and when to push past the feelings of fear and take a risk?

Having strategies for discernment is in no way a modern way of thinking. In all times and across cultures there have always been strategies for approaching hard decisions. We have always sought out fellow human beings for their special wisdom and explored practices of listening that might lead us to making clear choices.

There are many places in the bible we might look for wisdom and help with discernment, but I think Paul's letter to the church in Rome holds some pretty good advice. It is helpful to us as we make individual decisions, but maybe even more helpful to us as we discern the future of our congregation together. In chapter 12:2-5 Paul throws us the suggestion that discerning God's will requires both grace and humility. He'll go on to remind us that we are one body – all of us together – and all our different and varied gifts are part of understanding the wisdom of God we seek.

As your pastor I take comfort in the fact that discerning the will of God for our church is not my work alone, but something we work on together. Our process of thinking, listening, and intuiting God's direction is a

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

*Romans 12:2-3*

shared process. Our leaders must lead the way in humility, but it will require all of us, together, to move into the unknown of this post pandemic world. How best to carry out our mission in the world is up to all of us. I will be asking our newly elected session to join in a process of discernment in the next few months and I hope all of us can begin by considering one new thing we can do now? With the congregation and resources we have right now what is one new thing we can do to advance our mission and calling as Christ's church?



## **YOUTH GROUP**

High school youth group has begun on Sundays from 7 - 8:30 p.m. We generally meet every Sunday at the church for some fun and games and a bit of bible study and fellowship. Our main communication comes from our Student Communications Coordinator's large text group. If your phone number is not part of that group and you'd like it to be, make sure to let pastor Chad know and we'll get you included.

## **ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

**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 Numbers. 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](mailto:kjenkins1970@gmail.com). Prayer requests can also go to Krista.

## **ASH WEDNESDAY**

Join us for an Ash Wednesday service in the sanctuary at 7 p.m. on 2/22. We will share in scripture, prayer and reflection as we enter into the season of Lent.

## **PER CAPITA**

What's Per Capita? One item in our budget which never receives much attention is our Per Capita expense. This is a fixed dollar amount, \$42.50 per member in 2023, 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."

2023 Per Capita	
General Assembly Per Capita	\$ 9.85
Synod of Northeast Per Capita	\$ 4.25
Presbytery of the Highlands Per Capita	\$28.40
Total - \$42.50	



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 \$5,270. 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!

<b>Upcoming Servers</b>			
Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Fellowship
February 5	Peggy Macaoay	Linda Stetler and Anne Cooley	Marilyn El-Zahr and Natalie Gast
February 12	Ken Ernst	Karen and Warren Newman	Krista Jenkins and Mike Reaves
February 19	Karen Newman	Dick Kline and Mike Reaves	Karen Newman, Linda Stetler and Anne Cooley
February 26	Laurie Garneri	Madeleine Argue and Diane Staph	The Ernst Family and Kim Rodgers
March 5	Warren Newman	Krista Jenkins and Diane Staph	Marilyn El-Zahr and Natalie Gast
March 12	Dick Kline	Marilyn and Al El-Zahr	Krista Jenkins and Mike Reaves
March 19	Marilyn El-Zahr	Karen and Warren Newman	Karen Newman, Linda Stetler and Anne Cooley
March 26	Karen Newman	Linda Stetler and Anne Cooley	The Ernst Family and Kim Rodgers

**February 2023**  
**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.