

Parish Happenings

January 2016

FROM PASTOR CHAD

Resolutions Once Again

I have this habit when writing my “ringin’ in the New Year” column of making it very clear that I’m not one to make a list of resolutions. I’m not sure I can express my dislike of the practice. My feeling isn’t rational, but more of a gut level discomfort with a practice that seems kind of trite. Or maybe my distaste is the fact that I secretly do make resolutions to make changes in myself in the New Year, but I don’t announce them and I find (much to my grave disappointment) that I am no different than anyone else. We all make the same resolutions every year; they rarely stick and yet each new year we begin by making the same futile pronouncements about the many ways we would like to change ourselves: by losing a bit of our gut, improving our eating habits, organizing our scattered lives, paying closer attention to our children who are growing too fast, being faithful to that journal we always ignore...etc.

But, the thing that really galls me about the “cult of New Year resolutions” is the emphasis on self. It is always about me, about improving myself and doing it myself. It is a rather American thing to do really; to pull one’s self up by one’s bootstraps. Well, I’m here to confess that I cannot change my own self, on my own, simply by making resolutions and willing the changes to take place. The one thing I can count on year in and year out is the failure to change all the things I dislike about myself. I just can’t do it on my own by force of my own will.

So, if I were going to make a resolution this year (and of course I’m not going to – at least not publicly) I think it would be to simply slow down and to take seriously the freeing commandment of God to keep the Sabbath Holy. I can’t change myself, but it just might be possible to slow down enough to allow God to work on my heart. By keeping the Sabbath I can put myself in the right place to be changed by God. We race along in this culture running from here to there, working more than ever before and taking our work with us where ever we go. In my simple observation laptops and cell phones don’t improve our efficiency. They actually serve to make us worse drivers, more fragmented, too busy for others, and too busy for God. In preparation for my extended sabbath time (sabbatical) beginning in the spring I recently read a new book by my friend Rob Muthiah titled, *The Sabbath Experiment: Spiritual Formation for Living in a Non-Stop World*. Rob is a professor of Practical Theology at Azusa Pacific Seminary and in the book he presents an experiment or we might say a challenge he gives his students: practicing

“Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.”

Exodus 20:8-11 NRSV

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the Sabbath, yes, an actual full day of rest. He admits that his own practice of the sabbath turns out to be far from the ideal, but refuses to think of it as failure. Rob writes in his conclusion, "As we seek embrace and grow in a Sabbath rhythm of life, we all will have times when our ideals collide with our realities. Rather than feeling discouraged by this we might instead seek to discern how God is present and moving right in the midst of these collisions. The God who gave us Sabbath is also the God of grace who knows our hopes, our limitations, and our imperfections. Ours is a loving and patient God who will bless our efforts toward faithfulness, however imperfect they may be." My challenge would be for us to pick up a copy of the book and try out the Sabbath Experiment in 2016.

I believe God calls to us from the burning bush and God calls us away from our sheep, away from our nets, and away from our busy lives. When God calls we are to leave the sheep, leave the nets and put down our work for a time. If our hearts are to be conformed to the will of our maker we must rest in the presence of our maker. The New Year resolution I will not make is to slow my life down, but I do intend to do a better job of being obedient in keeping the Sabbath with the

hope that God will enter in and change my heart in 2016.

May you find rest and peace and renewal in keeping the Sabbath holy,



FROM THE FINANCE TEAM

Stewardship Campaign Update

Thank you to all who have returned their pledge cards, and to those who have not — it's never too late! Please consider making a pledge in 2016 to show your support for LVPC. You can mail or drop off your pledge card, or feel free to e-mail the Financial Secretary, Rich Ehrlich at rrr.ehrlich@gmail.com. If you have any questions regarding financial giving, please contact a member of the Finance Team — Stephanie Donlon at stephaniedonlon@yahoo.com or 537-2604 or Dick Kline at klinedj64@centurylink.net or 832-7538.

Per Capita Assessment

What is Per Capita?

Per Capita is LVPC's assessment from the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) to maintain our structure of governance and connectedness. Per Capita is assessed at \$34.00 per church member and is divided

among the General Assembly, Synod and Presbytery.

What do Per Capita dollars provide?

More specifically, per capita funding covers expenses related to holding the General Assembly meeting, bringing together church leaders for training events, developing and administering ordination exams, producing the Book of Order, and maintaining a Presbyterian presence at ecumenical groups and gatherings worldwide. On a more local level, Newton Presbytery uses per capita funding for administrative, building, and salary costs that help it to pursue its constitutionally required activities along with its mission to promote healthy congregations and community.

Why should I pay Per Capita?

Paying per capita is similar to contributing one's dish to a potluck meal. It is part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. This is important; let's try to raise the funds to cover our per capita expense this year! If you have not done so, please pay your family's (LVPC members only) portion of the per capita expense, and designate it as such on your check or envelope.

EVENING CIRCLE

The next gathering of the Women’s Association Evening Circle Bible Study will be held on Wednesday, January 20th at 7:00 p.m. in the Getz Library. We will be studying the last lesson in the Horizon’s Bible Study “Journeys through Revelation, Apocalyptic Hope for Today”. Scripture will be Revelation 21-22 and it is lesson 9 “Journey into the New Jerusalem”. Any questions please call Joni 391-6263 or Nancy 310-1748.

CALL FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

Sunday, January 31, 2016 at 11:30 a.m. following worship

As provided in the by-laws of the Lower Valley Presbyterian Church, there shall be a meeting of the congregation following worship on **January 31, 2016**, for the purpose of receiving the annual reports of the Session and reviewing the 2016 budget.

Other business to attend:

- We will elect a Nominating Committee for the year 2016
- We will elect Elders for the Class of 2018
- We will approve the Pastor’s Terms of Call

All are welcome to attend. Only active members of the congregation have voice and vote.

MISSION NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

The Giving Fair

Our 13th Annual Giving Fair was a great success! We raised \$12,668 for all the wonderful organizations that participated. But, with the monies donated by the congregation throughout the year with the offering, we were able to round up our giving to \$15,900! Thanks to everyone for supporting this initiative and supporting our mission. Check out some fun pictures of the event below:



Toy Drive

We collected a huge amount of toys for the Toy Drive this year. All the gifts went to impoverished children in Appalachia. Thank you for participating! I’m sure the children were overjoyed!

Soup Kitchen

We are volunteering at Elijah’s Promise in New Brunswick on **Saturday, January 9th from 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.** We still have one open space for an adult over 18. If you would like to join us, please contact Abby Ernst at abigailernst@gmail.com.

MEN’S BIBLE STUDY

It’s a great time to join the Men’s Fellowship Group! We are beginning a new study of the Prophet Isaiah. We meet on Saturday mornings from 8-9:30 a.m. If you are interested, have questions or would like a study guide see Pastor Chad.



HOMEMADE SOUPS!!

Please support our ASP Mission Trip this summer by purchasing delicious homemade soups made by our church families. Our group that travels with ASP is helping to keep those families less fortunate warmer, safer and drier! Look for members of our ASP team during Fellowship in the Parish Hall!

PRAYER CHAIN

The Prayer Chain is an email distribution group of people from our LVPC family. Prayer requests are forwarded to Wendy Garcia and then Wendy forwards the prayer to the entire group. If you would like your email address added to the Prayer Chain, please send Wendy an email at kwgarcia@msn.com.

MEMBERS NEEDED: SANCTUARY REMODEL PROJECT

Session has been discussing the desire to revamp the Sanctuary. New carpet? New paint? Remodeled and/or a new bathroom? Decor? If you have ideas and want to give input, we are looking for members to be part of the remodeling team. Responsibilities include meeting with the team on a regular basis, helping to design the plan and helping to raise the funds needed. If you are interested, please contact Stephanie Donlon, Abby Ernst or Warren Newman.

NOMINATING TEAM

LVPC has the same need for solid leadership required by any organization, community, or country. Each fall our nominating team is tasked with listening for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and through careful discernment, nominating (for election by the congregation) Elders who will guide us well.

I believe church Elders have a very challenging task because they are called to be spiritual leaders of the church and not simply political leaders. They “are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life.” (*Book of Order*, G-2.0301) While our session manages our budget, building, and activities, they are also responsible for paying attention to how God is moving and how God is calling us to be the Church. Serving our church in this way is, for many, a very fulfilling and rewarding experience.

We have enjoyed very strong Elders over the past 8 years and I’m grateful for the good leadership that has brought us to this point in our history. However, we continue to need solid leadership. Our Elders can serve no more than 2 consecutive 3-year terms and in the next few years some of our strong, committed leadership will be cycling off

of the Session. They will no doubt be called to other forms of service within the life of our congregation.

The nominating team has met and begun asking some members to prayerfully consider whether God is calling them to leadership in our congregation. The nominating team is not on a quest to fill quotas, but instead to approach faithful, committed, and talented members and help them discern how God is calling them to use their gifts. If you are interested in knowing more or in serving as an Elder please don’t hesitate to contact anyone on the the nominating committee or Pastor Chad or any of the current or past members of our session.

Nominating Team

John Leddie – moderator

Christina Wilson

Jeff Dahl

Anne Underhill

As the Church, our place in the community and in the culture is always shifting and changing and our leaders are called to help us adapt and change. I pray that our congregation will continue to be lead by Elders who understand their transformational role and are willing to carefully listen for God’s guidance.

– *Pastor Chad*

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The 2015 Children's Christmas play was a joy to be a part of. This year celebrating the story of Jesus' birth added the participation of our whole congregation; adults joined in by sharing the gifts for which they are thankful.



Get the newsletter via e-mail so you can enjoy the full color version! Call or e-mail Claudia in the office — 832-2933 or lowervalleypc@embarqmail.com

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Church Info:

Claudia Gilbert: Church Administrator

Phone: 908-832-2933

E-mail: lowervalleypc@embarqmail.com

Website: www.lowervalley.org

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

Session Members

Lisa Coffaro: 973-713-4870/coffaro423@comcast.net

Stephanie Donlon: 537-2604/stephaniedonlon@yahoo.com

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

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Hunter Wilson: (703) 304-1445/hunter22wilson@gmail.com

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

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
January 3	Warren Newman	Cindy and Tim O'Keefe	Judy Eckwielen Warren Newman Kim Rodgers
January 10	Christina Wilson	Janet and Gary Kipp	
January 17 — Family worship	Judy Eckwielen	Madeleine Argue Terry Hoffman	
January 24	Dick Kline	Lisa Coffaro Isabel Roppolo	
January 31	Terry Hoffman	Madeleine Argue Rich Ehrlich	
February 7	Stephanie Donlon	Carol and Anthony Casale	Stephanie Donlon OPEN OPEN OPEN
February 14 — Family worship	Rachel Gast	Marilyn and Al El-Zahr	
February 21	Stuart Solewater	Terry Hoffman Ken Ernst	
February 28	Nancy Knight	OPEN OPEN	

**If you are able to serve in an OPEN spot,
please let Claudia know. Thanks!!**

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830
January 2016

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.