

Parish Happenings

January 2022

FROM PASTOR CHAD

Shalom

As we begin 2022 it certainly feels like the movie *Groundhog Day*. If you haven't seen it – I'm shocked and saddened – it's a Bill Murray classic. Essentially, the main character played by Bill Murray is forced to relive the same day over and over until he sorts things out and gets it right. As we begin a third year facing COVID-19 with high case rates and over taxed hospital systems it can certainly feel like we've been here before.

I continue to be grateful to our session for their conscientiousness and thoughtfulness throughout the pandemic especially in response to the recent surge in cases of due to the Omicron variant. No one is particularly thrilled with church online (especially since most of us have spent too much time during this pandemic in front of screens already), but we are trying to make the most of these challenging times. At this point we expect to be closed for worship and other in person gatherings for at least 2 more weeks. When the session meets on January 18 we'll look at all the data from our area and discuss a plan for moving forward for the rest of January and February.

There seems to be some hope that this latest surge of cases will subside as quickly as it rolled in.

You may have noticed that this time around we've changed our platform and format for virtual worship. We are now on Facebook Live each Sunday morning at 10am with a live broadcast and an abbreviated worship service. The recorded service is available afterwards on the church Facebook page. You can quite easily find the our Sunday morning live event by going to the church webpage (www.lowervalley.org) where our most recent Facebook posts can be found.

During Advent and Christmas Tide our worship was centered on *Peace* or more accurately *Shalom* (the Hebrew word we translate as "peace"). I enjoyed the challenge of thinking about this important biblical concept and I certainly hope we can continue to consider the many ways we, as a church, are called to have *peace*, in all its fullness, at the center of our mission and calling. There are many ways that we might choose to be peacemakers in 2022.

I've never been much for new year resolutions, but if I had to make some for 2022 I think I'd be interested in finding new ways to bring peace to the troubled times in which we are living. Of course, by peace, I don't mean new breathing techniques, a plan to declutter, or making more time for myself (all things that would be good to do). I'd be looking for ways to more responsibly live in harmony with creation while pursuing justice for the disenfranchised and forgotten. I've come to understand that there is a direct line from Scripture's celebration of God's creation and the constant call for justice for the most vulnerable to the concept of *Shalom*. All our choices affect peace.



Jesus began his ministry, which he entrusted to his disciples and so to us, with the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19)

The image that Jesus is picking up on, when considered in its fullness, is a *shalom* picture. When all these things are happening we’re moving toward true peace. When we find creative ways to take up the work of Christ and bear his burdens we begin to get a glimpse of hoped for peace.

May we each find and share God’s peace in 2022.



MISSION NEWS

The Virtual Giving Fair raised \$2,716.20 for organizations that participated in this year’s Giving Fair. An additional donation of \$2,400 was donated evenly to these organizations from the Mission account. Special thanks goes out to Mike Reaves and Karen Newman for updating this year’s “Giving Fair” website. The Mission Team would like input from the congregation on any other ways we can help our community.

Tree Sales were very successful again this year, selling all 100 trees. A special shout out to Adam Ambielli, Sr. for helping us secure trees to sell this year. Our trees came from Canada. They had a beautiful fragrance and were very healthy. My tree drank plenty of water daily through the holidays. The church made \$4,392 in profit. We had many volunteers that made selling these trees possible. Thanks to all who dedicated their time. You are greatly appreciated.

The Mission Team is always looking for volunteers to join the team. If you are interested in joining, please contact Marilyn El-Zahr.

CHRISTMAS TREE SALE

The 2021 Christmas Tree Sale was another success. We sold all 100 trees for a profit of over \$4000. Thank you to everyone who donated their time to help with sale as well as those who purchased a tree. Special thanks to Adam Ambielli and Warren Newman for securing the trees at the eleventh hour and making the sale a reality this year.

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.

FROM FINANCE TEAM

Stewardship Update

Thank you to everyone who has returned their 2022 pledge card. We are busy finalizing our annual budget and your pledges give us a better understanding of our anticipated income for the year. We understand that circumstances sometimes change and you may not be able to meet your pledge, and that is OK; a pledge is simply a way of indicating what you are planning to contribute. If you have not returned your pledge card yet, there is still time. If you've misplaced yours and would like a new one, please contact Claudia in the church office. As always, thank you for your gifts! We appreciate each one we receive.

Counters Needed

The Finance Team is still looking to add to our pool of people willing to count the offerings on Sunday mornings. The addition of on-line giving and our new financial software has made the process easier, faster and more streamlined than it was in the past. If you are able to commit to one Sunday a month to help with the counting, please contact Karen Newman at 908-763-9483 or email kjnewman115@gmail.com.

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
January 2	Karen Newman	N/A	N/A
January 9	Marilyn El-Zahr	N/A	
January 16	Al El-Zahr	N/A	
January 23	Warren Newman	N/A	
January 30	Jeb Edwards	N/A	
February 6	Mike Reaves	Karen and Warren Newman	OPEN OPEN
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	

If you are able to serve in one of the OPEN spots, please let Claudia know. Thank you!

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830
January 2022

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.