

FROM PASTOR CHAD

Renewal Time

It seems not so very long ago that my children were all under seven and we were living along the central coast of California. I was approaching the end of my fifth year as the Associate Pastor at our church and it was clear that God was moving us to the next adventure. In the process of discerning whether or not to make the move to Califon I sought the advice of many mentors and friends in ministry. Just as I had experienced in the past, God used my community of peers and mentors to guide me and 7 years later I continue to enjoy serving as the pastor here at Lower Valley Presbyterian.

One universal bit of advice I was given by all the pastors I was speaking with was to make sure that the congregation either had a sabbatical policy or was willing to make a sabbatical part of my call. As I'd never been steered in a wrong direction by my team of unofficial agents (I've always hated "selling myself" to a committee in the interview process and wished I had an agent) I negotiated with the search committee to include a 2 month sabbatical after 7 years of service.

For those of you wondering, yes, sabbatical comes from the word for sabbath — better known as the fourth commandment (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). So, in our context, what is a sabbatical really? "A sabbatical is a strategic season of Sabbath-keeping, aimed toward the end of renewing one's love of God, God's people, and God's call to well-being."* I've also learned in the last year that a sabbatical is just as important a renewal opportunity for our congregation. "When leaders experience renewal, congregations are re-energized, too. Things don't just return to normal when the leader returns. New patterns of leadership emerge. New vision sprouts up."**

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I've been discussing the shape of my renewal time with the session for over a year and have gotten a great deal of support. The session has also encouraged me to pursue a sabbatical grant through the National Clergy Renewal Program and has appointed a small team of congregation members to work with me to develop a proposal. Receiving a grant would reduce the financial burden to our church and would also allow me to extend the timeframe of my sabbatical.

Together we have made a great deal of progress in the last seven years. I came to Lower Valley with the hope of bringing a renewed vision, energy, community and spiritual life to the congregation. I sensed a strong call and I continue to be called to serve as the pastor here. However, it is very easy to achieve a level of comfort and then rest. I look forward to the opportunity to step back from the regular routine, look back, listen, imagine the future, and be refreshed for what is next at Lower Valley. As I reflect, the congregation too, will have the opportunity and be encouraged to do the same.

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The writer of Hebrews exhorts us, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us..."

I think we've run well the first part of our race together, but we need to begin working on a strategy for the next part. It is my hope that an extended time for renewing my own sense of call will give the congregation a chance to do the same.

At the present I am working with a small group of church members to develop a grant proposal, which will be further shaped by our session and the congregation. Once we hear back (September) I will begin planning accordingly for a sabbatical (following my eighth year at LVPC) in 2016.

We would welcome any feedback or questions as we progress in our planning together. Dick Kline, May Saxton, and John Leddie are working on the proposal with me and as always you can talk with a session member.



In 2008, the Louisville Institute commissioned a survey of all the pastoral leaders to whom it has made sabbatical grants, along with a representative member of the

congregations they served at the time of the sabbatical. The following are some of the findings: ***

- As an overall summary question, we asked grantees and Congregational Representatives whether the sabbatical had a lasting impact on their pastoral vocation and career development. Ninety percent of grantees report either a "moderate" or a "large" effect on their subsequent vocational trajectory.
- Eighty-seven percent of pastors report that their sabbatical significantly renewed their commitment to ministry, something noticed also by eighty-six percent of congregational observers.
- Eighty percent of Congregational Representatives believe that the sabbatical strengthened the pastor's commitment to their congregation.
- seventy-five percent of congregations report that the sabbatical tangibly benefited the life of the church.

*It's About Time: Planning a Life Giving Sabbatical Presented by Bill Carter, A Presbyterian Outlook webinar.

** Grace Notes: A collection of wisdom and advice from recipients of grants in the Lily Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs.

*** "What Difference Does a Pastoral Sabbatical Make?" by Sheldon W. Sorge from the website "Resources for American Christianity" <http://www.resourcingchristianity.org>

MAJOR ANDREW STAIANO RETIRES

Please join us as we congratulate Andy Staiano on his distinguished military career and service to our country. We look forward to reconnecting with Andy and his family this spring as they move to NJ to embark on their civilian life.

MAJ Staiano's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (one oak leaf cluster), the Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal (three oak leaf clusters), the Army Achievement Medal (five Oak Leaf Clusters), the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Korean Distinguished Service Medal, the Parachutist Badge and the Combat Action Badge.

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

An excerpt from the [Companion to the Book of Common Worship](#) (Geneva Press, 2003 110-111)

What we hear during Lent is the power and possibility of the paschal mystery, and that the way of the cross, the way to Easter, is through death. To appropriate the new life that is beyond the power of death means we must die with Christ who was raised for us. To live for Christ, we must die with him. New life requires a daily surrendering of the old life, letting go of the present order, so that we may embrace the new humanity. "I die every day!" asserts Paul (1 Corinthians 15:31). Resurrection necessitates death as a preceding act. The church's peculiar Lenten claim is that in dying we live, that all who are baptized into Christ are baptized into his death. To be raised with Christ means one must also die with Christ. In order to embrace the resurrection, we must experience the passion of Jesus. The way of the cross, the way to Easter, is through death of the "old self." In dying, we live.

Therefore, at the beginning of Lent, we are reminded that our possessions, our rulers, our empires, our projects, our families and even our lives do not last forever. "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). The liturgies throughout Lent try to pry loose our fingers, one by one, from presumed

securities and plunge us into unknown baptismal waters, waters that turn out to be not only our death tomb but surprisingly our womb of life. Rather than falling back into nothingness, we fall back on everlasting arms. Death? How can we fear what we have already undergone in baptism?

It is the power of the resurrection on the horizon ahead that draws us into repentance toward the cross and tomb. Through the intervention of God's gracious resurrection, lifelong changes in our values and behavior become possible. By turning from the end of the "old self" in us, Lenten repentance makes it possible for us to affirm joyfully, "Death is no more!" and to aim toward the landscape of the new age. Faithfully adhering to the Lenten journey of "prayer, fasting and almsgiving" leads to the destination of Easter.

During the final week, Holy Week, we hear the fullness of Christ's passion, his death, and resurrection. From Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and on to the Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday), all of Holy Week focuses on the passion. As his followers, we travel Christ's path of servanthood through the Lord's Supper and the suffering of the cross toward the glory of Easter, all of which underscores the

inseparable link between the death and resurrection of Jesus.

EVENING CIRCLE

Women's Evening Circle will be meeting Wednesday March 18th at 7:00 p.m. in the Getz Library. We will be continuing our Bible Study "Journeys Through Revelation, Apocalyptic Hope for Today" from the Horizon's Bible Study 2010-2011. Please come and join us in fellowship and Bible Study. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Nancy Knight 537-4347 or Joni Nodes 391-6263.

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.

SOUP FOR SALE!

Our Soup Sale to benefit our ASP volunteers' expenses and work in Tennessee this July continues during Fellowship. Please help support this wonderful program to make homes safe, warm and dry for our neighbors in Appalachia.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Kids in the 6, 7, 8, SS class took on the duties of the liturgist on February 15. It was another snowy icy morning when many people were not able to venture out to church, but some of the kids were able to show up and they did a very nice job. It is wonderful to see our children participating in the worship service.

In SS, we are headed into the spring curriculum which talks about preparation for the Easter Season. Lent is a traditional time in the church to focus on Christian practices. Last Sunday, the children worshiped in the sanctuary listening to the scripture and Chad's message. A number of children also attended the Ash Wednesday service. As this season continues, SS teachers will encourage your children to talk and listen to God, to help others, and to forgive those who have hurt them. These are not

new lessons, but kids might want to choose one and focus on it during Lent. We encourage the kids to remember the Lenten season at home with their families.

It is once again time to consider the summer program for **everyone!** G.i.F.T. (Growing in Faith Together) flyers are available online and in church. This year's program will be July 12-16. At every age level, we will explore what Jesus meant by saying, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people". This year, the adult portion will be led by a guest. New this year will be a middle school & teen program led by Chad. We need adults to contribute one evening to lead activities for the younger kids. Please grab a flyer and sign up. Training sessions (choose one session only) for adults will be March 8, from 12:00 to 1:30,

and March 10, from 7:00-8:30. Come join the fun!

The Spring Retreat for Sunday School Teachers will be April 25, from 9 to Noon. There will again be a guest speaker....something we all enjoyed last spring....and breakfast! Anyone who is interested in possibly teaching SS in the future is welcome. Please contact someone on the Spiritual Formation Team for more information: Kim Rodgers, Christina Wilson, Natalie Gast, Susan Huntington, Linda Stetler.

The 4th and 5th grade Sunday School class is taught by Linda Stetler and Richard Fincher. See what they have been doing....pictures and article by Finch follow:

The 4th/5th grade Class met only twice in February, owing to joining adult worship one Sunday and heavy snowfall the other. But the class, made up mostly of



boys with occasional visits from a couple of young ladies, studied the Gospel of Mark, specifically the importance of prayer and the different ways we can talk to God. We discussed the different types of prayer: A.C.T.S. – Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication, and practiced examples of each. We talked about why sometimes we were not comfortable sharing everything with God and brainstormed ways we could become more at ease. Practice! We also discussed unclean spirits and the miracle of Jesus driving a demon out of a possessed man in the synagogue in Capernaum. We compared the puny powers of each super hero

that we could think of with the awesome power of God. This is a very bright and polite group of young people. I am always amazed at their willingness to contribute and with their knowledge of current events. It is a pleasure to learn from them.

MEMBERSHIP AT LVPC

If you’ve been hanging around Lower Valley for a while you may be wondering about joining our community. This is your chance to learn more about us, about the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and about how you can become more deeply invested in this growing community of disciples. Join Pastor Chad and some guests after worship for **two Sunday’s in March (March 1 and March 8) from 11:30 - 12:30**. Plan on grabbing a cup of coffee and gathering in the Library. For those with children there will be a plan for their supervision while we gather.

Easter Flower Order Form
(orders are due with payment by 4/1)

If you would like to order Easter Flowers to decorate our sanctuary, please fill out the order form below and drop it in the offering plate or send it to the church office. Prices listed below include foil.

Please indicate the desired quantity and enclose payment with your order.

Name: _____

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Flower	Price	Qty	Total Cost
Mini Daffodil	\$2.85	_____	_____
Daffodil (6")	\$5.90	_____	_____
Easter Lily (4-5 blooms)	\$8.90	_____	_____
Tulip (6 blooms)	\$5.65	_____	_____
Tulip (8 blooms)	\$9.00	_____	_____

Pastor Chad's Contact info:

Cell phone: 892.0044

E-mail: revchadrodgers@gmail.com

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

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Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
March 1	Sue Huntington	Lisamarie Boehm Terry Hoffman	Sue Huntington Lisa Coffaro Lisamarie Boehm Terry Hoffman
March 8	Nancy Knight	Carol and Anthony Casale	
March 15 (family)	Sunday School	Sunday School	
March 22	Rebecca Newbold	Janet and Gary Kipp	
March 29 (Palm Sunday)	Marilyn El-Zahr	Terry Hoffman Kirk Petrik	
April 5 (Easter)	Rebecca Newbold	Karen and Warren Newman	Warren Newman Stephanie Donlon Terry Hoffman Kim Rodgers
April 12	May Saxton	Stephanie and Jeff Donlon	
April 19	Warren Newman	Terry Hoffman Linda Stetler	
April 26	Judy Eckwielen	Carol and Anthony Casale	

Art Table Schedule	Children's Message Schedule
March 15: Jen Donnell and Susan Freed	March 22: Kim Rodgers
April 5: Jen Wysocki	April 19: Ron Ascenzo
May 24: Isabel Roppolo	May 17: May Saxton

**If you are able to serve in an OPEN spot please contact the church office.
If you are unable to serve in an assigned spot please try your best to find a
substitute and let the office know of any changes. Thanks so much!**

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830
March 2015

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.