

# Parish Happenings

March 2017

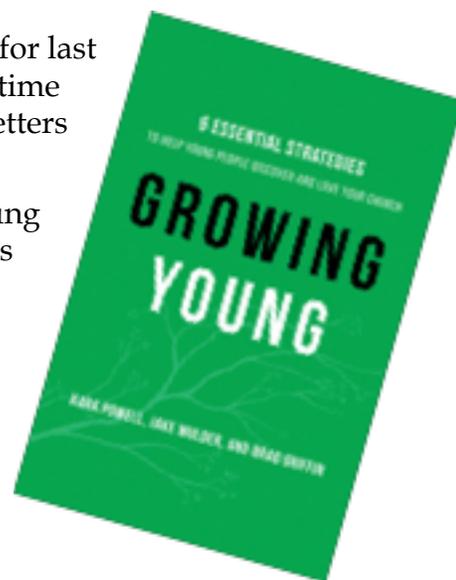
## FROM PASTOR CHAD

### Prioritize Young People (and families) Everywhere: From Rhetoric to Reality

At first glance the title of Chapter 6 in *Growing Young* may sound redundant. You may have immediately started searching old emails for last months newsletter thinking, “didn’t he write about this chapter last time and the time before that?” If you couldn’t find the last couple newsletters don’t worry. I’ll clear things up right from the start.

The last two chapters encouraged churches to “empathize” with young people and to surround them with “warmth.” These are similar ideas to prioritizing young people and all three commitments certainly interact, but they are distinct and the researchers behind *Growing Young* found that “prioritizing young people everywhere” is a *hinge point*. Even churches that may have several of the other core commitments I’ve already talked about run the risk of growing old if they fail to “prioritize young people everywhere.”

So, what does this mean, what does it look like, how are we at LVPC doing, and how can we become a church that does this?



“Theologically, we stand on solid ground when we prioritize young people everywhere in our congregation Jesus led the way for us in his shocking attention to children and his reorientation of the community around them. It was a disproportionate prioritization.”

*Growing Young, page 220*

### What does it mean to prioritize young people everywhere?

It means our “tangible, institutional commitment to allocate resources and attention – not only for specific youth or young adult programming but also across the life of the congregation.” This means that whenever we consider an activity, action, or direction for our congregation we ask whether or not young people are central and, even more importantly, are young people part of the decision making and implementing of any activity, action, or direction. It also means that families are at

the center of our worship, mission, and community life. We know from research that the parents are the most important influence on the faith formation of young people, so we need to keep our support and encouragement of parents and their ongoing faith formation in our sights.

And most importantly I think it means taking Jesus seriously. It was Jesus, after all, who commanded that we both welcome children and become like children (*Mark 10:14-16*).

**What does it look like?**

Making young people a priority simply shows up everywhere. It is more a total church culture than anything else. Prioritizing young people and their families is less about programs and youth leaders and more about the way all our members think. The culture of a congregation is not just what it does, but how it thinks. "In short, even a great leader can't force priority if the church culture doesn't support it. Similarly, young people in [the *Growing Young*] study whose congregations make them a priority talked less about their church's programs *for* them and more about their church's culture – specifically its relationships, traditions, and rituals." (p. 214) This means we can talk about young people being important to us, but what matters are the actions and attitudes we bring to our total inclusion of young people: we should see them leading worship, joining adults in mission, and being part of our church community in every other possible way.

**How are we doing? and How can we do better?**

Our narrative and our openness to young people have been great strengths over the past few years. However, I think there are many ways we can do better. We talk a lot about young people, but as the evidence in *Growing Young* shows talk is only part of the story and what our pastor does to emphasize, encourage, and include young people can only take us so far. For us to transform our church life in this way would require intentional action at every level of our church life.

If we want to do better our first step might be for everyone to join the Spiritual Formation Team in reading this book. I've only been able to scratch the surface of each chapter in these newsletter articles, but to make young people a priority in everything, we all would need to make an effort to gain a deeper understanding of how our church culture could change to strengthen our commitment.

I'd personally be pretty excited to see what could happen if we were to get crazy serious about *Growing Young* by shifting our priorities and transforming our church culture.



## **WORSHIP**

### **Ash Wednesday Service**

Join us Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary here at Lower Valley as we journey together through song, prayer, reflection, and the imposition of ashes. This is a joint worship project of the Lower Valley and Fairmount Presbyterian Churches.



### **“FAITH AND POLITICS”**

Join us for a new group that will explore the intersection between faith and politics. We will begin by looking at scripture, specifically the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5, and discuss what we as Christians are called to stand for in our world. Using that as our base we will explore topics the group would like to discuss and learn more about. Using books, videos, and guest speakers we will shape our views and opinions and discover ways to act on them. Of highest importance will be the emphasis on respect so we can create an environment where honest questions can be asked, with the ultimate goal being to draw us as a

Christian community closer to the heart of God and communicate that to our community and world. We meet every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of the month from about 11:45-12 and ending at 1 p.m.

### **EVENING CIRCLE**

Women’s Evening Circle Bible Study will be held on Wed. March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the Getz Library. We will begin a new study from the PW/Horizons Bible Study titled “Who is Jesus? What a Difference a Lens Makes” by Judy Yates Siker. The Author invites us to join her “on a journey to expand our understanding of who Jesus was and is -- a journey of our hearts and minds, a journey that we will take together. She invites us to be good conversation partners along the way, sharing with one another as we experience the various lenses through which Jesus is seen and how the perspectives impact our understanding of

Jesus.” Please join us in this journey. Any questions please call Nancy Knight 537-4347 or Joni Nodes 391-6263.

### **SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

#### **Spiritual Formation of Children**

The 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> grade class has been doing some active advertising for the summer GiFT program. Watch for them in church. Mark the dates on your calendar: July 9-13. We hope to see you all this summer as we enjoy a meal and conversation together. This program is for all ages.

The Confirmation class has begun with discussions of faith development and the Presbyterian Church. If you would be interested in joining the class, please see Kim Rodgers or Natalie Gast.

Sunday School classes are meeting regularly and enjoying the study of God’s word. The 4 and 5 grade

class wrote Cinquains last week about choosing life.

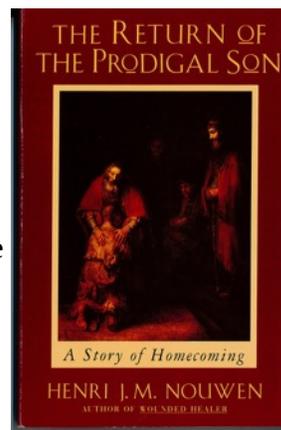
*Choose Life  
Live peacefully  
Love your family  
Share God's love for one  
another  
Love  
Ava Keiser*

*Choose Life  
Obey God  
Kindness for everybody  
Don't think pessimistically  
about others  
Yay  
Bridget Donlon*

*Choose Life  
Live great  
Like sport\*\*\*football  
Grateful for Mom's love  
Live  
Ryan Valenta*

### **Men's Bible Study**

It's always a great time to join our Men's Fellowship Group! We are pausing in Chapter 15 in the Gospel of Luke and are reading *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. We meet on Saturday mornings from 8-9:30 a.m. If you have questions, are interested, have questions or would like a study guide see Pastor Chad.



### **Youth Group**

High school students...Join us on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month as we spend time looking at issues of faith through scripture and discussion in order to dive deeper into what it means to have a relationship with God. Yummy dessert and lots of laughs are always included. We meet at 7 p.m. at either the Rodgers or the Gasts. Feel free to invite friends. **Our March meeting dates are 3/3 and 3/17.**

### **APPALACHIA SERVICE PROJECT (ASP) HAPPENINGS**

#### **Homemade Soups!!**

Please support our upcoming summer ASP Mission Trip 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!

We are looking for church members (of any age) who would like to contribute something to our newsletter. Share your experiences, your memories and your hopes for LVPC. We want to hear from you. E-mail Claudia at [lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com](mailto:lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com).

## CAMP JOHNSONBURG

Spring is in the air (at least for the moment), but even if we were mired in snow it would be time to start thinking about summer — at Camp Johnsonburg. Registration for summer is open and now is the time to get plugged in. Our church is able to provide scholarships for up to half the cost. There are tons of options all summer long. Camp brochures are available in the church office or find all the details online at [www.campjburg.org](http://www.campjburg.org). If you've got further questions then seek out Pastor Chad or a Johnsonburg alum (any of the Rodgers, Harris, El-Zahr, or Hostler kids for starters).

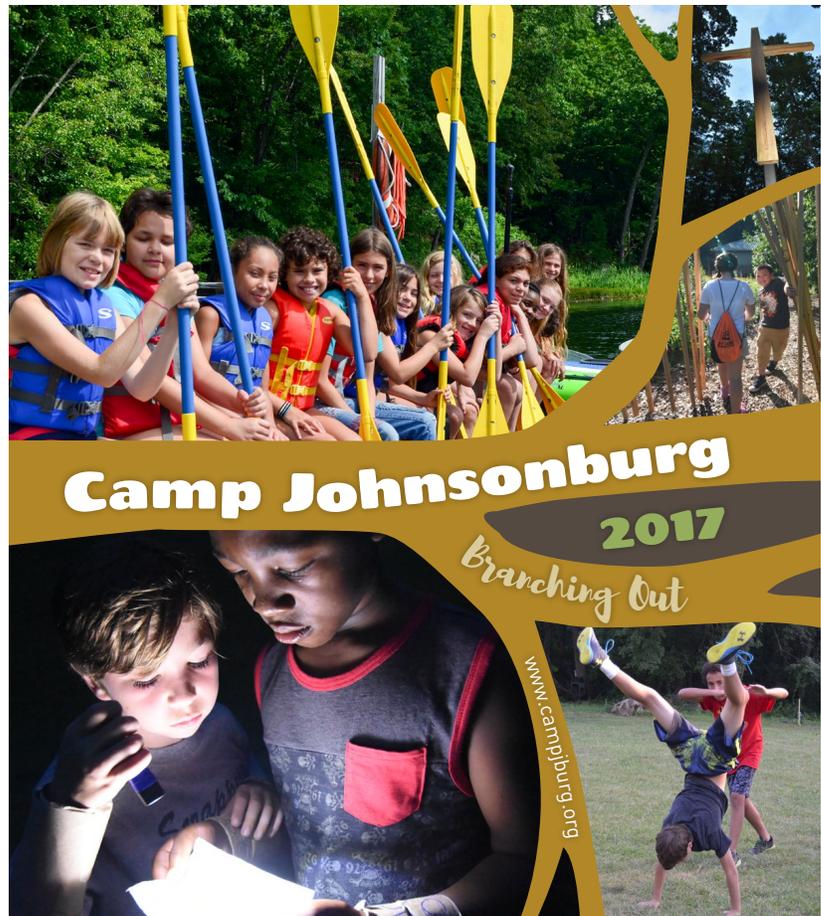
### Why Camp Johnsonburg?

3 Reasons— here's why:

1. **Make Friends** — At camp, there are no social groups or cliques. There are no labels. Camp is the place where kids make their very best friends. Under the careful watch of trained counselors, campers experience life in a welcoming community. J'burg alumni consistently share stories about lifelong friends they met at camp.

2. **Unplug** — Let's face it: we are glued to our screens. Coming away to camp provides a place to detach and experience face-to-face interactions. Recent research supports the benefits of time in nature. Walking to the dining hall, the archery range and the lake; playing outside; holding animals and looking at Saturn through a telescope are all big and small opportunities to breathe fresh air, look and think about God's creation.

3. **Nourish Faith** — Small group discussions and new challenges allow campers to ask questions, ponder, pray and worship in an outdoor setting. For so many, Johnsonburg is their 2<sup>nd</sup> home — and the place where they feel closest to God.



Get the newsletter via e-mail so you can enjoy the full color version and help us cut down on paper and postage costs! Call or e-mail Claudia in the office — 832-2933 or [lowervalleypc@embarqmail.com](mailto:lowervalleypc@embarqmail.com)

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

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Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
March 5	Lisamarie Boehm	Rich Ehrlich Madeleine Argue	Wendy Garcia Warren Newman <b>OPEN</b> <b>OPEN</b>
March 12	<b>OPEN</b>	Terry Hoffman Ed Getz	
March 19 — Family Worship	4/5 Graders	4/5 Graders	
March 26	Abby Ernst	Cindy and Tim O’Keefe	
April 2	Warren Newman	Lisa Coffaro Isabel Roppolo	Wendy Garcia Warren Newman Stephanie Donlon Terry Hoffman
April 9 — Palm Sunday	Dick Kline	Nancy and David Knight	
April 16 — Easter Family Worship	<b>OPEN</b>	Karen and Warren Newman	
April 23	Christina Wilson	Daryl Minch Judy Eckwielen	
April 30	Stephanie Donlon	Rich Ehrlich Ed Getz	

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church  
445 County Road 513  
Califon, NJ 07830  
March 2017

## **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.