

Parish Happenings

March 2018

FROM PASTOR CHAD



On Sunday February 18, the morning after 10-12 inches of snow covered our cars and driveways, just 4 days after the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, and the shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, there were just 25 people in church. Given the amount of snow the night before I was not terribly surprised. However I had, spent several days thinking through my sermon on Psalm 80, and hoped to let this *psalm of lament* give more of us

space to cry out to God together. To that end, as students around the country continue to call out for adults to come to their senses, I share some of my thoughts from February 18.

I'm angry and disgusted that I live in a nation:

- with a history of violent oppression demonstrated in the thousands of lynchings of innocent black men, women and children;
- where Christian people prefer and celebrate the myth of vigilante justice promoted by films in the tradition of *Dirty Harry*;
- where Christian people have normalized extreme levels of gun violence because of their own fear, self interest, and belief in the myth of safety through violence;
- that allows politicians, lobbying organizations, and corporations to lie to us and themselves about the facts of the relationship between the number of gun deaths and the number of guns we harbor;
- where law enforcement respond to the community they are sworn to protect, with military tactics, as if they are an enemy to be neutralized;
- and that those same officers must fear the possibility of staring down the barrel of an assault rifle because we allow them to be sold with little restriction;
- that continues to celebrate violence in our recreation time through first person shooter video games, movies and television, and war games (paint ball, air soft, and laser tag).

O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry
with your people's prayers?

You have fed them with the
bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink
in full measure.

You make us the scorn of our
neighbors;
our enemies laugh among
themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may
be saved.

Restore us, O LORD God of
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we may be saved.

— Psalm 80:4-7, 19

In the weeks since the shooting at MSD High School students have lead the way for a reasonable response to preventing another tragedy and they are going to the heart of the problem — guns. Many

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

— Jesus (Mark 10:13-16)

of the students have specifically called for a ban on semi-automatic rifles and large capacity magazines. They are calling for students and teachers around the country to walk out for 17 minutes on March 14 to send the message, "We are not safe at school. We are not safe in our cities and towns. Congress must take meaningful action to keep us safe and pass federal gun reform legislation that address the public health crisis of gun violence. We want Congress to pay attention and take note: many of us will vote this November and many others will join in 2020."¹

My generation and my parents generation has failed our children and grandchildren and it seems it is time we follow their lead. Jesus embraced children for their ability to see clearly the emergence of God's Kingdom. Students across the nation see clearly that the number and availability of guns make us less safe. I'd suggest you engage in a dialogue with our own students at LVPC who are quite capable at connecting this issue with Jesus's words in his Sermon on the Mount.

The solutions to our problem of mass shootings is complicated and multifaceted for sure, but it is not arming our teachers or encouraging more people in the general public to carry concealed weapons. These suggestions neither reflect the data² we have nor

can they be reconciled with the Kingdom of God we pray, every Sunday, to emerge "on earth as it is in heaven." Rather than a 'target hardening' approach to safety it makes more sense to pass sensible laws and and make personal changes that allow teachers to teach, students to be students and schools to be schools with out needing to also be fortresses...

"... society can think of students in different ways at different times, but the more teachers think of students as threats to be assessed, the less educators will think of students as individuals to nourish and cultivate."³

This issue cuts to the heart of what kind of society we want to be. As Americans, who call ourselves Christians and so are disciples of Jesus, we are called to live sacrificial lives that demonstrate the presence of God's Kingdom on earth. I believe that Ben Dickmann has the right idea about how we should respond. He wrote on his Facebook page (accompanied by pictures of his AR-15 being surrounded for destruction), "I'm putting my money where my mouth is... no one without a law enforcement badge needs this rifle. This rifle is not a 'tool' I have use for... If our lawmakers continue to close their eyes and open their wallets, I will lead by example." Taking a similar approach the CEO of Dick's Sporting Goods has made it clear that his company has heard the voices of students and will no longer sell assault-style firearms or high-capacity magazines.

I've been studying the Psalms recently and an insight I gained from Eugene Peterson is helpful in this context. Even if our laments are off base, or more about self-pity (Psalm 77 possibly), what honest prayers ultimately do is transform us, shift our thinking, and move us to actions that reflect the transforming love of God in the world. Honestly laying our lives bare before God is likely to move us closer to the way of Jesus however hard it may be.

May our prayers of lament, our fears, and our bitter tears of inaction be transformed, by the God of Hosts, to culture changing actions so that we might be saved.

¹ [#Enough: National School Walkout](#)

² [Americas Gun Problem Explained](#)

³ [Why Security Measures Won't Stop School Shootings](#)

MISSION NEWS

Christmas Tree Sale

Update

We raised about \$3,450 from the tree sale this past December. We are giving \$2,500 towards the ASP mission trip this summer to support our members that are participating. In addition, we are donating the balance of the money to Family Promise of Hunterdon County. Thank you to everyone that supported this sale with their time and/or purchase of a tree.

Box City

Family Promise of Hunterdon County is hosting their Box City fundraising event again this year. It will be on **Saturday, May 19th**. Feel free to sign up and join in on the fun. (Flyers are posted on the bulletin board with more information.) OR, if you would like to help another way, please donate. Just write a check to LVPC with "Box City" in the memo. Help our congregation make change in our local community.

Movie Night

To reinforce our commitment to combat homelessness, we are showing "Homeless in Hunterdon" for our next film night. Please join us on _____.
Snacks and discussion to follow. Hope to see you there!

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

Parish Life is looking for some more people to sign up to help with Coffee and Conversation particularly for the 1st Sunday of the month, but help on any Sunday is most appreciated. Please see Renee Ollerenshaw, Lisa Coffaro or Lisamarie Boehm.

APPALACHIA SERVICE PROJECT (ASP) HAPPENINGS

ASP Soup Sales

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. Please contact Isabel Roppolo at isabelroppolo@yahoo.com or 908.319.0249 (call or text) with questions.

Holy Week Schedule

Maundy Thursday (3/29)

Communion Service at 7 p.m. in the parish hall

Good Friday (3/30)

*Sanctuary open from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. for prayer and reflection
Living Stations of the Cross at St. John Neumann Parish in
Califon at 1 p.m.*

Easter Sunday (4/1)

*Sunrise Service at 6:30 a.m. with fellowship
following in the parish hall
Family worship at 10 a.m. with fellowship
following in the parish hall*

SPIRITUAL FORMATION **Spiritual Formation of** **Children**

The Spiritual Formation of Children Team is expanding its horizons to include the spiritual formation of all people in our church. As we start on this journey, we would like to invite anyone interested to join us. If you would like more information, please contact Pastor Chad.

The 3/4/5 Sunday School class will be leading worship on April 15. Mark this on your calendar so you can join these young people in worship.

The 6/7/8 grade class is involved in a project with their teachers, Erik Gast and Stu Solewater. Erik says, *"In the middle school class we are working on an in depth study of the first three chapters of the book of John. We will be meditating on its meaning and crafting images to tell the story. The images will then be carved on wood panel we have created. Often we only hear Gods words in passing. We are hoping that a longer, deeper study will give us a chance to engrave these words in our hearts."*

Some of our high school group went to Camp Johnsonburg recently for a weekend retreat with their teachers Kim Rodgers and Natalie Gast. (see photo) Natalie writes, *We attended a confirmation retreat last weekend at camp Johnsonburg where we explored our faith and bonded through camp activities. We had a great time!*





Easter Flower Order Form
(orders are due with payment by 3/25)

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	\$4.00	_____	_____
Daffodil (8")	\$8.00	_____	_____
Easter Lily (4-5 blooms)	\$8.00	_____	_____
Tulip (6 blooms)	\$6.00	_____	_____

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.

Pastor Chad's Contact info:

Cell phone: 908.892.0044
E-mail: revchadrodgers@gmail.com

Church Info:

Claudia Gilbert: Church Administrator
Phone: 908-832-2933
E-mail: lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com
Website: www.lowervalley.org

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

Session Members

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Renee Ollerenshaw: 832-7250/Jems101992@gmail.com

Karen Newman (clerk): 638-4332/kjnewman115@gmail.com

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
March 4	Lisa Coffaro	Jennifer Kozak and David Reid	Lisa Coffaro Renee Ollerenshaw Sue Hostler Karen Newman
March 11 — Family Worship	Rachel Gast	Cindy & Tim O'Keefe	
March 18	Warren Newman	Lisamarie Boehm and OPEN	
March 25 -- Palm Sunday	OPEN	The Gast Family	
April 1 — Easter Sunday	OPEN	Karen and Warren Newman	Warren Newman OPEN OPEN OPEN
April 8	Judy Eckwielen	Lisa Coffaro and Isabel Roppolo	
April 15	4th & 5th Graders	4th & 5th Graders	
April 22	OPEN	Jennifer Kozak and Madeleine Argue	
April 29	Marilyn El-Zahr	Lisamarie Boehm and Rich Ehrlich	

Please let the office know if you are able to serve in one of the OPEN spots

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830
March 2018

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.