

Parish Happenings

March 2022

FROM PASTOR CHAD

Lent

Last week I learned that the Rev. Jay Bartow, a former colleague in ministry, had died at the age of 76, quite unfairly, of a rare type of pulmonary fibrosis. Jay served as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Monterey for more than 30 years. I had the privilege of serving with Jay (as Associate Pastor) for five of those years toward the end of his career. I was young then, fresh out of seminary, and full of confidence and optimism.

Jay had been around, but remained optimistic, vibrant, and passionate about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was generous, humble, brilliant, and had a quirky sense of humor. I'd say he had forgotten more bad jokes than I had heard in my lifetime, but he never ever forgot a joke – ever.

I'm grateful to have known and especially to have worked with Jay. He trusted my gifts for ministry, gave me space to fail, opportunities to lead, and to preach, all while enduring my lack of experience and youthful miscues.

Jay believed strongly in the abilities, gifts, and the vision of the congregation. As he described it, he preferred to let ideas and direction "bubble up" from the congregation rather than unilaterally setting the course. As a young pastor I at times found his habit of depending on the congregation frustrating, but came to see it as one of his great gifts and insights.

I'm thankful for my sabbatical, back in 2016, which allowed me to spend some time in California with some of my previous mentors and guides. The opportunity to sit down with Jay and his wife Gail, seven years after I left for my present call in Califon, was an important chance to express gratitude for the ways that Jay had shaped my call to lead here at Lower Valley.

As I remember it, one of Jay's favorite metaphors for Lent was Major League Baseball's spring training. Baseball players use spring training to remind their muscles what it is like to play every day. They use the five or six weeks of spring, in the warm sunshine of Florida or Arizona, to shake off the bad habits of the off season and recommit themselves to being the best they can be on the field. Mostly they practice, practice and practice the fundamentals of the game they love. Jay was a natural athlete, but didn't overuse sports metaphors (the only sermon illustration I remember him over using was the movie *Bruce Almighty* which he loved) so this one got my attention. Being a baseball fan myself, I always liked this comparison and found it helpful.



Point Lobos State Park, CA: Photo by Y S on Unsplash



Lent is a yearly chance to stretch our spiritual muscles that might need to be reminded of what they can do. It is a chance to reconnect with habits and routines that are needed to sustain an athlete for the long season ahead and our spiritual lives need that same kind of reminder from time to time. We sometimes let our practices of prayer and worship get flabby.

The pandemic has felt in many ways like an off season (the kind of off season that is elongated by an MLB owner lock out... but I digress) that went on for way too long. It is time to start stretching and remind our hearts and minds and spiritual core what it feels like to engage the rhythms of faith.

This Lent let Jesus's journey to the cross be an invitation to reengage the spiritual practices that animate our faith and sustain us in our own lives. The baseball season is long and if players want to make it through the dog days of summer they need a focused spring training. A life of faith too requires a constant practice of the fundamentals.

May your season of lent be a time to reclaim the fundamental practices of your faith.

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.

PRAYER CHAIN

Reminder! The church maintains a virtual prayer chain. If you would like to be informed about those in need of prayers, and are willing to commit to prayerfully participate, please contact Krista Jenkins at kjenkins1970@gmail.com. Prayer requests can also go to Krista.

Califon Public School Announcement

Are you looking for small class sizes? Califon Public School is for you! Tuition Program is now open for non-Califon residents. We offer an all inclusive, individualized learning program for each student with various research-based best practices and programs. Please call 908-832-2828 to speak with Mrs. French-Gonzalez or visit califonschool.org to learn more about our tuition program and become a part of the amazing things happening here in Califon.

NEWS FROM THE MISSION TEAM

The Mission Team will be collecting donations again to benefit local food pantries every Sunday in the narthex. We will also be accepting monetary donations. If you have any change at the end of the week, please donate it on Sunday. There are many families struggling right now, and every little donation adds up.

PARISH LIFE

LVPC is restarting “Coffee and Fellowship” at the conclusion of worship each Sunday. Please stop in after church for coffee and treats. This is a wonderful time to get to know one another better and to share special happenings in your life with your church family. We are asking for volunteers to sign up in order to coordinate coffee and light refreshments. This need not be a “heavy lift” and the church can reimburse for food and drink purchases. If you’re interested, please email Krista Jenkins at kjenkins@pewtrusts.org. We are asking that you sign up for a week each month along with others who will form a team so as not to burden the same person each month. If enough volunteer there should be adequate coverage each week. As you can see below, we need additional volunteers for each week.

Week 1: Marilyn El-Zahr and Erin Edwards

Week 2: Krista Jenkins and Mike Reaves

Week 3: Karen Newman and Erin Edwards

Week 4: The Ernst Family

Week 5: Madeleine Argue, Diane Staph, Cindy O'Keefe, Judy Eckwielen

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
March 6	Marilyn El-Zahr	Karen and Warren Newman	Karen and Warren Newman
March 13	Warren Newman	Mike Reaves and Madeleine Argue	
March 20	Karen Newman	Peggy Macaoay and Krista Jenkins	
March 27	Judy Eckwielen	Lisamarie Boehm and Renee Ollerenshaw	
April 3	Jeb Edwards	Judy Eckwielen and Mike Reaves	
April 10 — Palm Sunday	Marilyn El-Zahr	Karen and Warren Newman	
April 17 — Easter Sunday	Warren Newman	Marilyn and Al El-Zahr	
April 24	Karen Newman	Abby and Ken Ernst	

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

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.