

Parish Happenings

May 2023

FROM PASTOR CHAD



Resurrection Every Day

It is easy to feel as if Easter has come and gone... and been gone for a while. We may have looked forward to that special Sunday or the break from the school routine that accompanies it, but even the break seems like a distant memory. If we're honest most of us have moved on from Easter: on to spring sports, the last few weeks of school, mulching the flower beds, tuning up the mower, planting spring greens, finalizing our summer vacation plans, and all the regular stuff of life.

Yet, Easter hasn't actually ended, and it is very much still a thing in the life of the Church. If nothing else the liturgical calendar reminds us that Easter is still in full swing. For the first two-thirds of May our Sundays are marked as Easter Sundays. I try to keep us focused on this small detail because it has huge theological significance.

As I said during the children's message last week, "Christ is Risen!", is not just the call to worship on Easter Sunday, but the call on every Sunday of Easter.

We really shouldn't even limit ourselves to Easter Tide. "Christ is Risen!" is our call to worship each and every day when we rise in the morning hours. As Christians we are a resurrection people. We are who we are because Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead.

The reality of Christ's resurrection permeates our lives as Christian people. Nothing is as dead as it seems and our lives are never the same after encountering the resurrected Christ. We take this truth to our places of work, to our fellowship with friends, to our family meals, to the sports field, to meal time, and even into the mundane tasks of life. We are constantly called to be a people shaped by resurrection and resurrection hope should never be out of our view.

Eugene Peterson reminds us that the resurrected Jesus has a command for the disciples, "[Jesus's] address is a command to continue the work he has begun in and with [the disciples], accompanied by his promise to be with them as they do it:

'God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.'

(Matthew 28:18-20, MSG)

Three verbs activate their resurrection life: train, baptize, and instruct."*

Easter Sunday wasn't a once in history event that we remember one Sunday a year or even a few Sundays a year. Easter is an everyday event. Every day we wake up as people who are commanded to train, baptize, and instruct. The stuff of life in the 21st century is shaped by resurrection. As

Peterson also explains we practice the resurrection not as a skill, but a way of being. It is our work and our identity.

This new reality, this new way of living, is not simply about a final destiny after we've lived life (however good or bad) it involves us now in the very present moment. Easter Sunday is not an event or a date on the calendar that has passed for 2023. The truth and power of Easter Sunday is a reality as you read these words, figure out what you will eat for dinner tonight, lose patience with your child, argue with your spouse, get frustrated with your neighbor, and it will continue being reality when you rise tomorrow.

When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Colossians 2:12

Are you beginning to see that resurrection, while it was a moment in history nearly 2000 years ago, isn't just one moment in history? All of our lives begin again in resurrection: "when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2:12) We have been raised to a new life by the power of God who raised Christ. God, doesn't forget or abandon us, but keeps reaching out in love and grace. We are a found people raised to new life and invited to be part of God's Kingdom every day we have breath.

Resurrection people are not focused on some future heavenly state of being, but on the prayer we pray every week in our worship – "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." This is the time to share the hope of resurrection in our acts of radical hospitality, care for creation, justice seeking, care for the poor, love and compassion.

May the knowledge that we are an Easter people lead us to living as Easter people each and every day and in every interaction we have with others.

**Living the Resurrection: The Risen Christ in Everyday Life, Eugene H. Peterson. (p. 97)*



WORSHIP IN THE PARK/CHURCH PICNIC — JUNE 4

Please join us on June 4th at Califon Park for our annual "Worship in the Park" and church picnic. The Edwards' triplets will be baptized in the river as well! After worship, we'll enjoy a meal, so bring a salad or dessert to share. **And, this is an old-fashioned earth-friendly picnic, so bring a basket with dishes, utensils, cloth napkins and pack 'em up to take home for washing.**

YOUTH GROUP

High school youth group gathers on Sundays from 7 - 8:30 p.m. We generally meet every Sunday at the church for some fun and games and a bit of bible study and fellowship. Our main communication comes from our Student Communications Coordinator's large text group. If your phone number is not part of that group and you'd like it to be, make sure to let pastor Chad know and we'll get you included.

EASTER PLAY

Our 1st ever Easter play was a huge success! Thank you to directors, Ken Ernst and Mike Reaves, set designer, Michelle Cirotti, and our children, Lucy Cirotti, Lucy and Harrison Ernst, Jack and Liam Newbold, Corrinna Reaves and Blair and Abby Vreeland, who shared their gifts, and promoted the idea.



ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Men's Fellowship: There's plenty of bible study, but that's not all. Join us on Saturdays at 8 a.m. We share life and wrestle with scripture together. At the present we're finishing up Deuteronomy before moving on for a dose of New Testament life. Contact Chad with any questions.

NEWSLETTER OPTIONS

If you would like to see the newsletter in full color, consider receiving it via email (and help save money on postage), or if you would no longer like to received the newsletter, please send an e-mail to Claudia in the office at lowervalleychurch@gmail.com. Thank you.

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