

## Parish Happenings

### November 2023

#### FROM PASTOR CHAD

As my sixteenth fall serving as pastor at Lower Valley slips past us I've been thinking of all the different approaches we've taken to our annual "stewardship season". For the most part our approach has remained rather subtle. This time of year has generally included a sermon or two on the topic, a newsletter article, and a well crafted letter from our finance team.

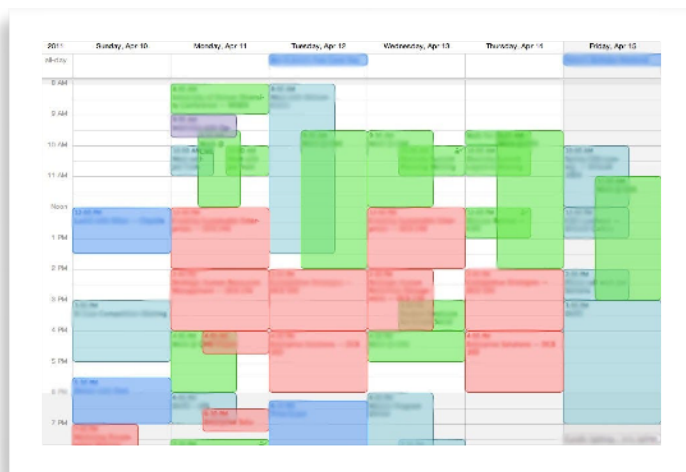
We've always stressed how helpful your pledging is for planning and executing a budget and it remains the case. When people make a pledge for the coming year we have a much better idea what our financial circumstances are going to be and how we can manage the whole of our ministry. Over all these years our

congregation has proved to be generous, faithful, and consistent. We have become a bit smaller since before the COVID pandemic and your pledges are as important as ever.

In past years I've suggested that, though we're drawing attention to pledging money to make the budget work, our real focus is responding to Jesus' words, "Take up your cross and follow me." Supporting our shared ministry with our money is one way we respond to God's generosity toward us and acknowledge that everything we have is a gift from God. Scripture is quite clear that our wealth doesn't belong to us, but is a gift that is intended to be a shared blessing for us and for our neighbors. I'm glad to be part of a congregation that believes (belief proven in past action and quiet generosity) that together we are working towards God's purposes.

It will continue to be important for each of us to faithfully, and prayerfully consider how much of our financial resources we will pledge to this congregation in the coming years. After many years of planning and discussing, and a literal pandemic level interruption, we have completed and begun some rather significant building related projects. This has been made possible largely due to the estate of Ruth Paradise (Ruth loved our church, was generous in life and remembered us in her will as well), but the burden will eventually shift to those of us who are actively gathering and worshipping together in the present. In order to sustain this shared work we will need to significantly close the gap between pledge income and expenses in the coming years.

It is certainly true as Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." I want to stress though that we can't just talk about money and in fact it might be just as important to rephrase Jesus's words for our present age.



I think today Jesus might also add, "For where your time is spent, there your heart will be also." If we are going to be people who truly and faithfully follow Jesus we must take very seriously how we spend our time. There are many faithful people teaching Sunday school, organizing our fellowship, taking care of the bills, keeping the building standing, and serving in other areas of our congregational life and mission and yet, though I don't have a scientific study to prove it, I would bet that our congregation is like most: 20% of the people are taking on 80% of the work to carry out our mission.

As we race through our activities it never hurts to step back and take an assessment of our time or even go so far as to make a time budget (not too different from budgeting our finances). What would happen if we started asking some of the following questions:

Is planning my next vacation always occupying more of my time than meeting the needs of the poor?

Do I spend more time entertaining myself and my family than I do listening to those in need?

Does my yard get more attention than neighbors who need to experience the love of Christ through me?

Is my job so demanding that there is no time left for faith formation?

Do I spend more time scrolling through Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok than I do reflecting on scripture and the world around me?

The thing is, discipleship, is about following Jesus. It is more than showing up on Sunday morning for 65 minutes of worship and 30 minutes of coffee time. Discipleship is the time we spend encouraging a neighbor, meeting the needs of the poor, sharing Christ's love by being a listening ear, sitting with someone who no longer has the physical capacity to leave their home or hospital room, and bravely sacrificing our own comforts to carry out God's work in the world.



## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

### ✿ **First Ever (at least in recent history) Friends Giving**

No plans for Thanksgiving yet? Then join the church family gathering in the Parish Hall at 4 p.m. for a shared meal, community building, board games, and whatever else feels right.

The Turkey and stuffing are taken care of so bring your clan and a Thanksgiving side.

Please RSVP to Pastor Chad by 11/19.

### ✿ **Get Prepared for Advent**

Everyone is welcome to be part of our Church Family Advent Workshop. We will gather on Friday December 1 at 6 p.m. for a simple supper of soup and bread. Then we'll share some activities to help the whole church celebrate Advent (greening the sanctuary and banner making) and help us move through the season at home (wreath making).

12/3 First Sunday of Advent

12/10 Second Sunday of Advent

12/17 Third Sunday of Advent

12/24 Fourth Sunday of Advent

☆ 10:00 a.m. children's play and worship

☆ 4:30 p.m. Family Xmas Eve worship

☆ 7:30 p.m. Lessons and Carols worship

## **CHRISTMAS TREE SALES**

A great way to help out, meet our neighbors, and get in the Christmas Spirit. Keep an eye on your email for the opportunity to sign up via Sign Up Genius. We will be selling on Saturdays (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.) and Sundays (11 a.m. - 5 p.m.) starting 11/25 and 11/26 through 12/23 if necessary.

## 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 the gospel of Mark. 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](mailto:lowervalleychurch@gmail.com). Thank you.

## UPCOMING SERVERS

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Fellowship
November 5	Warren Newman	<b>OPEN and OPEN</b>	Marilyn El-Zahr and Natalie Gast
November 12	Judy Eckwielen	Karen and Warren Newman	Krista Jenkins and Mike Reaves
November 19	Dick Kline	Mike Reaves and <b>OPEN</b>	Karen Newman, Linda Stetler and Anne Cooley
November 26	Karen Newman	Marilyn El-Zahr and <b>OPEN</b>	The Ernst Family and Kim Rodgers
December 3	Mike Reaves	Krista Jenkins and Peggy Macaoay	Marilyn El-Zahr and Natalie Gast
December 10	Marilyn El-Zahr	The Ernst Family	Krista Jenkins and Mike Reaves
December 17	Warren Newman	Karen and Warren Newman	Karen Newman, Linda Stetler and Anne Cooley
December 24 — 10 a.m.	N/A — Children's play	<b>OPEN and OPEN</b>	The Ernst Family and Kim Rodgers
December 24 — 4:30 p.m.	Ken Ernst	The Ernst Family	
December 24 — 7:30 p.m.	Krista Jenkins	Mike Reaves and <b>OPEN</b>	
December 31	Karen Newman	Krista Jenkins and Peggy Macaoay	Madeleine Argue, Diane Staph, Cindy O'Keefe, Judy Eckwielen