

# Parish Happenings

October 2015

## FROM PASTOR CHAD

### Why, After 24 Years, I still spend my Wednesday's with Students

Last Sunday we were challenged by the book of James to have a realistic understanding of Christian community. If we're honest we know that any church we participate in will be full of broken people whose lives are not neat and tidy. We know this to be true because we are ourselves imperfect people whose lives are not neat and tidy. James 5:13-16, however, does prescribe a remedy: we might call it radical community.

James suggests that sharing our sufferings by prayer, our joys with song, and our brokenness through confession in the presence of the Lord leads to healing.

While this is certainly the biblical vision for the role of the Church in our lives it proves to be particularly difficult in the twenty-first century (although given James' 2000 year old teaching, maybe this is not unique to us).

A former professor of mine, Jonathan Wilson, has summarized the problem this way,

We've distorted the Church's message with that of culture. We've made our churches places where you visit 1 hour a week with no lasting connection to our fellow worshippers or to the God who has called us. We sold out to the message of the cul-de-sac which said that we'd be just fine on our own. We've allowed our churches to become places that don't practice radical community.

This is of course a generalization; I have had the privilege of witnessing moments of radical community in our church's life together. That said, I believe we have much growing to do and should continually be asking how we can shuck the constant drone that says, "we'll be just fine on our own?" This is an all too real and present danger.



Monkey Soccer

So all this brings me to the reason, at 42 years old, I continue to spend my Wednesday evenings with middle and high school students. Aside from the obvious — I've never grown up completely and still love playing silly games — I believe that our students can begin to get a vision for radical community at youth group and that this is crucial as they begin to understand discipleship. I've told our high school students, many times, what I learned from my high school

Are any among you suffering? They should pray.

Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise.

Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

*Continued from previous page*

pastor: that the next 10 years will be the most important decade of their lives.

This fall our theme for Wednesday night youth group comes from John 10:10. Jesus said, "I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of." (*The Message*) I believe that radical Christian community leads to abundant life and it is my hope that our students get a glimpse, on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, of the kind of community James urges us to create.



### **EVENING CIRCLE**

Women's Bible Study group will meet Wed. Oct. 21, 7:00 p.m. in the Getz Library. We are continuing with the Horizon's Bible Study "Journey through Revelation Apocalyptic Hope for Today", Lesson 6. Lesson books can be found in the Getz Library. Any questions please call Nancy Knight 537-4347 or Joni Nodes 236-7996.

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Giving Fair (formerly known as the Alternative Gift Fair) is scheduled for Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup> and will be here before we know it! Put it on your calendar and tell your friends about what a wonderful event this is. Please speak with Abby Ernst or any member of the Mission Team about helping out. See "Mission News" for more info!!

### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**

Sunday School has begun and there is energy in the air all through the Sunday School classrooms and even out of doors!

Nicole Dahl tells us the Pre-K- 1<sup>st</sup> class is getting more and more comfortable in their classroom and are a very sweet bunch of children...the Dahls are enjoying their time with these little ones!

A note about the 4/5 grade class tells us that they have been learning to know each other and have begun a prayer jar and are trying a prayer circle as part of their class routine. They are also planning on bringing in contributions to support Juliette, our Compassion child in Africa.

The Middle School classroom is brimming with up to 14 participants. Erik Gast and Dick Fincher will be kept very busy with some of the most inquiring minds in LVPC. Luckily, Erik and Dick also have very inquiring minds so it should be a great year for them and their students!

Natalie Gast writes that she is enjoying getting to know the High School class and that they even took advantage of great weather to meet out of doors.

Please check out the bulletin board in the Sunday School hallway — LVPC blessings. The 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> class will be asking for our participation shortly.

All in all a great start to the school year.

### **Some important reminders of upcoming activities:**

Camp Johnsonburg: (You can contact Kim Rodgers if you need more detail)

- October 10 — Ultimate Youth Night with high ropes- Middle school and High School
- October 30-31 — 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Fall Retreat

Family Worship is October 11: If you can volunteer to do set-up and clean-up of the art tables for Family Worship Sundays, please see Kim Rodgers or another member of the Spiritual Formation Committee.

**If we are interested in having a youth-driven Christmas program this year, we are in need of someone who will be willing to lead this effort.** This would include finding and sizing a play or other program to fit our talent and space; organizing volunteer efforts (we have plenty of talent ready to work scenery creation, costume updating and to help at rehearsals) and scheduling rehearsals. Please contact a member of the Spiritual Formation Committee (Natalie Gast, Christina Wilson, Kim Rodgers, Linda Stetler, Sue Huntington) if you feel you could volunteer for this effort!

The following reflection is from Kelly Hostler on her summer experience at Camp Johnsonburg this summer:

*Camp Johnsonburg is a Presbyterian Camp located in Frelinghuysen, NJ. I've been going there for 11 years and I started going when I was not quite 6. My sister and I went together for a half week. When our parents came to pick us up on Wednesday we were dying to go back! There's so many great things about camp, like silly songs, high ropes activities, arts and crafts, swimming in the lake, going on hikes, All Camp Worship, and archery. But the best thing about camp is the community. Part of*

being at Camp Johnsonburg is being part of the community there. All of the counselors are fun, full of energy, and amazing leaders. They always make sure each camper has the best time ever. Camp also makes sure that each camper is part of the Johnsonburg community. You make so many new friends at camp, even people not in your unit. I love the sense of community there and it's probably the reason I keep going back each year. From the awesome counselors to the friendships you build, Johnsonburg really is a family.

The other reason I love camp is because Johnsonburg has definitely helped build my faith. Every day at camp, you have bible study with your unit and every evening there's All Camp Worship where we sing songs and talk about the bible verses for that day. Counselors always think of fun ways to help teach the bible verses. And being an older camper, my unit always have great discussions about God and the bible. There was one time this summer when my unit was late to an activity because we didn't want to end our bible study conversation! Johnsonburg also has a Labyrinth. This Labyrinth is special because we walk there and walk through the Labyrinth in silence. It's a great time for prayer and reflection and it's a big camp favorite. Camp Johnsonburg played a big role in building my faith and I always recommend it knowing it will do the same for others. If you have any questions about Camp Johnsonburg you can find me in church or visit their website [www.campjburg.org](http://www.campjburg.org) -Kelly Hostler

### **PRAYER CHAIN**

The Prayer Chain is an email distribution group of people from our LVPC family. Prayer

requests are forwarded to Wendy Garcia and then Wendy forwards the prayer to the entire group. If you would like your email address added to the Prayer Chain, please send Wendy an email at [kwgarcia@msn.com](mailto:kwgarcia@msn.com).

### **MISSION NEWS**

- **Califon Street Fair:** LVPC will have a booth at the street fair this year. Be sure to stop by and say hello. It is on **Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup> from 1-5pm.**
- **Soup Kitchen Silverware:** Elijah's Promise in New Brunswick was very appreciative of our silverware donation. We would like to donate again. It's simple and quick to accomplish. Please join us at Coffee and Conversation on **Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup>** to help us wrap silverware. It's an easy way to help someone in need of a meal.
- **Giving Fair:** The Giving Fair is on **Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup> from 10-2.** Get an early start on your holiday shopping and purchase *symbolic* gifts through donations to local, regional, national, and international charities. There will be representatives from 18 non-profit organizations with *interactive* exhibits. Come pet a Seeing Eye puppy, spin a wheel of questions and play other games. Also, this year we will have raffle baskets with ticket sales benefitting the Open Cupboard Food Pantry. And, if you bring one canned food item to the event, you will receive one FREE ticket! As a final note, the Giving Fair has always been a very

successful event in regards to the amount of money given to worthy organizations. Our goal this year, however, is to have more people attend the event, get to know the organizations and share the knowledge. We encourage you and your family and friends to join us on **Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup>.**

- **Local Action Team:** Starting this fall, we are creating a "local action team". Our goal is to help members of our congregation as well as neighbors in need with **small jobs**; e.g., raking leaves, painting a fence, etc. If you know someone that needs something done, please contact anyone on the Mission Team. Anyone can participate at any time. There is no long-term commitment. Adults *and* children are encouraged. Stay tuned.

**Mission Team:** Madeleine Argue, Judy Eckwielen, Abby Ernst, Lora Harris, Tracy Heuneman, Nancy Knight, Renee Ollerenshaw, Chad Rodgers, Isabel Roppolo, and Anne Underhill.

### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY**

Do you have a morning, evening or Saturday morning to spare? The Open Cupboard Food Pantry and Thrift Store in Clinton could use your skills. OCFP needs volunteers, both men and women, who could commit regularly to help in the following areas:

- **Food Pantry** – stock shelves, pull orders
- **Thrift Store** – receive donated items, sort and price



those items, price clothing, learn to run the cash register and check out customers

There is training involved and commitment but speaking from experience as Thrift Store Volunteer, I have found volunteering a very rewarding experience. I have made many friends through my Wednesday and Thursday volunteering that I look forward to each week. We share our love of reading, family stories, and even go to lunch together every other month. I even support OCFP as I often find several treasures that I can't do without and, of course, several books as I love to read.

It is rewarding to know we are helping families and individuals who are experiencing a difficult time with their groceries. The money raised in the Thrift Store helps to buy the food for the Pantry. In the store, I see students shopping for items for their new apartment or dorm room, collectors looking for that special bargain, people shopping for clothing for their families or extended families to name a few

shoppers. Thrift Store shopping has become a great pastime.

Please contact Anne Underhill, Director, at 908-730-7320 to receive an application and to set up an appointment to visit OCFP. I look forward to seeing you in Clinton. Call me if you have additional questions.

*Judy Eckwielen  
Mission Team Member*

**FAMILY PROMISE OF  
HUNTERDON COUNTY  
(formerly Interfaith  
Hospitality Network)  
NEEDS HELP!**

Fairmount Presbyterian Church in Tewksbury is looking for volunteers to sit with, make dinner for and stay over night at its Community House with families that are displaced. There are all shifts and openings available and it's a wonderful way to help those in need. The time frame we are trying to cover is October 11 through October 25. If you have questions or would like to help you can speak with Chad, Lisa Coffaro or Renee Ollerenshaw for info. If you are already

familiar with this wonderful program and would like to host/help, please contact Dave Loth at 876-3656 or 908-752-3524.

**CHRISTMAS ALREADY**

We know you're amazed that we've beat Walmart to putting Christmas on your mind, but if we're going to have a children's play this year we're going to need some committed organizers/directors. There is a strong network of support (set crew, costume sewers, plenty of children, etc.), however, it is time for some increased involvement and fresh perspectives. Please speak to Pastor Chad or anyone on the Spiritual Formation Team to find out more: Christina Wilson, Natalie Gast, Linda Stetler, Sue Huntington, and Kim Rodgers.

**UPDATES AT THE MANSE!**

Recently, we've been doing some updates at the manse -- a new door was installed (see attached photo of Warren Newman and Terry Hoffman happily working), windows in the kitchen are in the process of being replaced and much needed exterior painting was completed.



## **PASTOR CHAD'S 2016 SABBATICAL OVERVIEW**

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church has received a grant of \$49,721 to enable its minister, Chad Rodgers, to participate in the 2015 National Clergy Renewal Program. LVPC is one of 144 congregations across the country selected to participate in this competitive grant program, which is funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc and administered by Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. Established by the Endowment in 2000, the program's grants allow Christian congregations to support their pastors with the gift of extended time away from the ministerial duties and responsibilities.

Ministers whose congregations are awarded the grants use their time away from the demands of daily ministry to engage in reflection and renewal. The approach respects the "Sabbath time" concept, offering ministers a carefully considered respite that may include travel, study, rest, immersive arts and cultural experiences, and prayer.

Through the National Clergy Renewal Program, congregations apply for grants of up to \$50,000 to support renewal programs for their pastors. Collaborative in nature and implementation, the program allows congregations to partner with their ministers in developing an experience that addresses their unique renewal needs and aspirations. Recognizing that ministers' families are subject to the stress and demands placed on pastoral leaders, the program encourages pastors to involve their families in renewal activities. Congregational needs during the minister's renewal experience also are considered. Up to \$15,000 of the grant may be used to support interim pastoral leadership during the pastor's retreat, as well as renewal activities within the congregation. Since the National Clergy Renewal Program's inception, more than 2,000 congregations have participated in the program, including the 144 congregations receiving the grants in 2015.

The guiding theme for our sabbatical proposal came from Hebrews 12:1-2, "Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." The following excerpt from the official proposal sets the tone for all of the activity of LVPC and Chad and family during the sabbatical.

Long runs, long marriages, long road trips, long silences, and long pastorates all require the common thread of perseverance and faith. In each case there are surprises, unexpected challenges, breakdowns, and blessings. My imagination has long been captivated by Eugene Peterson's notion that, "the *norm* for pastoral work is stability. Twenty-, thirty-, and forty-year-long pastorates should be typical among us (as they once were) and not exceptional. Far too many pastors change parishes out of adolescent boredom, not as a consequence of mature wisdom. When this happens, neither pastors nor congregations have access to the conditions that are hospitable to maturity in the faith." (Under The Unpredictable Plant, Eugene Peterson, p. 29)

In Chad's absence LVPC will continue to be guided by the session with the support of a temporary congregational resource pastor. This pastor will provide continuity, administer sacraments, preach most Sundays, support the congregation in planning worship and providing pastoral care. We will be challenged to expand the role of the whole congregation in the whole life and mission of our church. In addition, the themes of G.i.F.T. and other adult studies will correspond to some of Chad's sabbatical activities.



Chad's sabbatical time, designed along the themes stated above, includes many different activities. It begins with the challenge of running the Big Sur Marathon followed by some time in California with Kim. This will include intentional visits with some long time mentors and friends who have shaped their call. After many years of interest in Ignatian spirituality, Chad will have the opportunity to explore first hand some of these practices through an 8 day directed silent retreat at a Jesuit retreat center in Colorado. This will be followed up with ongoing spiritual direction and a 6-9 month "retreat in everyday life" prayer practices following the sabbatical time. Finally, during recent summers Chad's family has found great joy and life through being on the road and exploring large parts of the United States. Therefore in June the family will head out for Alaska pulling their small travel trailer. The journey will cover some 8,000 miles of driving, exploring culture and history, and wondering at God's creation along the way.

"Lilly Endowment intends for this program to enable pastors to live for a while at a different pace and in a new environment, in Sabbath time and space," said Dr. Christopher L. Coble, vice president for religion at the Endowment. "We can think of no better way to honor these hardworking, faithful men and women than to help them experience personal growth and spiritual renewal in ways that they themselves design and find meaningful. We regularly hear that these renewal experiences are transformative for pastors, their families and their congregations."

The Rev. Rev. Robert Saler, research fellow and director of the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs, noted that the National Clergy Renewal Program integrates key attributes of healthy congregations, including a mutual respect for the renewal needs of both ministers and the congregations they serve.

"The program provides an opportunity for congregations to express appreciation for their ministers' service and leadership," Saler said. "At a time when leaders are often praised for their pace of innovation and productivity, the National Clergy Renewal Program pays homage to the timeless wisdom embedded in the practice of reflection and renewal."

Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis directs the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations and a second program for congregations across the United States through its Center for Pastoral Excellence.

**Pastor Chad's Contact info:**

Cell phone: 892.0044

E-mail: [revchadrodgers@gmail.com](mailto:revchadrodgers@gmail.com)

**Church Info:**

Claudia Gilbert: Church Administrator

Phone: 908-832-2933

E-mail: [lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com](mailto:lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com)

Website: [www.lowervalley.org](http://www.lowervalley.org)

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

## Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
October 4	Rebecca Newbold	The El-Zahr Family	Stephanie Donlon Terry Hoffman Lisamarie Boehm Lisa Coffaro
October 11	Judy Eckwielen	Carol and Anthony Casale	
October 18	<b>OPEN</b>	Cindy and Tim O'Keefe	
October 25	Marilyn El-Zahr	Janet and Gary Kipp	
November 1	Sue Huntington	Judie and Adam AMBIELLI	Sue Huntington Lisamarie Boehm <b>OPEN</b> <b>OPEN</b>
November 8	Stephanie Donlon	Judy Eckwielen Lisamarie Boehm	
November 15	<b>OPEN</b>	Nancy and David Knight	
November 22	Stephanie Donlon	Terry Hoffman <b>OPEN</b>	
November 29	Warren Newman	Lisa Coffaro Isabel Roppolo	

**If you are able to serve in an OPEN spot,  
please let Claudia know. Thanks!!**

October 2015  
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.