

Parish Happenings

September 2022

FROM PASTOR CHAD

Remedy for Unstable Times

Somehow the approaching fall feels a little different in 2022. It could be that so much has shifted since the pre-COVID years. Time stood still for two years and yet slipped uncomfortably by at the same time. We find ourselves not quite beyond the health effects of the pandemic and still in the midst of societal upheaval and division that hasn't been known in my lifetime. We've certainly had other moments in American history that felt like this, but none in recent memory. Being from California I know what big earthquakes can feel like and the last two and a half years have felt like one long earthquake. There has been nowhere safe to stand, no ground that wasn't shaking, and no refuge from the stress of so much change and turmoil.

We all experience change and transitions throughout our lives. Sometimes we are prepared for change, at other times we're surprised by it, there are times we fight it, sometimes we are overwhelmed by what comes our way, and there are times we look forward to what will be next, but rarely do we face so much change on so many different fronts.

Many of us are facing new things this fall: children off to new schools and far away colleges, career changes, empty nests, health limitations and challenges, new ways of working in our changing economy, and the general unknowns that come from post pandemic (can we even say that yet?) life. On top of the normal shifting sands of moving through life we live in an unprecedented age of rapid change: from the climate to the technology we use on a daily basis. The world as many of us have known it is slipping away and global turmoil and discomfort presses in on our individual lives. We are more aware today, possibly than ever before, of the fragility of our society.

... Blessed are the poor
in spirit, for theirs is the
kingdom of heaven...

Matthew 5:1-11



Evidence of a Changing Climate: Historic flooding in Pakistan

Our technological devices have made some tasks easier while unintended consequences have at times become oppressive forces in our lives: a 24 hour news cycle, screen addiction, and the loneliness of connection through social media are just some of what causes us stress and anxiety (not to mention I have to relearn how to use the devices after every update).

What hasn't changed, in over 2000 years, is the Church and its mission. Sure, at times the church has lost its direction, taken detours from its mission and perpetuated injustice, but

the way of Jesus has remained. Along the way it's had different modes of worship, architecture, styles of music, and approaches to carrying out the mission Jesus handed down, but the core of who we are as the Church has not changed. We still worship each week and we still seek to extend the love of

Christ and the grace of God to a hurting and broken world. This hasn't changed. We continue to spur one another on in acts of hospitality and welcome to outsiders, finding those who are lost, comforting the sick and grief stricken, working for a peaceful community, embracing our neighbors, praying for our enemies, and so ushering in the reign of God.

We continue to be a people working to form an authentic community where doubts and questions are discussed and faith is practiced. We practice a faith that rejects the empires and powers of this world in order to embrace the way of Christ who came not for the social climbers and rule followers, but for all of us who are in some way broken by this world and in need of healing.

Before the winds change, the leaves fall, and your new routines are settled I invite you to make our weekly worship and a bible study (men's, women's, youth groups or something new we create together) part of your lives. Practicing the relatively unchanged core of our Christian faith alone isn't easy. However, when we practice together we invite the many blessings of God into our lives. In the midst of all the change and challenge in our world I invite you to find a place of rest and grounding, this fall, in our community here at LVPC.

May we all share, together, in the blessing of community rooted in Christ.



SILVER BELLS AND BEAUS

A singing group for seniors will be holding rehearsals in our Parish Hall on Wednesday mornings, starting September 14 at 10:00 am. The "Silver Belles and Beaus" was sponsored by the Hunterdon Country YMCA Senior Center in Glen Gardner for 25 years. With the recent COVID pandemic and the closing of the Center, the group needed a new rehearsal space, and Pastor Chad was kind enough to take us in.

Members of the parish of a "certain age" are invited to join this friendly group of ladies and gents. No audition is required, and you do not need to read music. We sing mostly familiar popular songs, and this fall we will be rehearsing holiday favorites. Members are asked to pay a \$25 registration fee.

If you are interested in joining or have any questions, please call director Michele Collins at 908-337-0366.



MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS BIKE CHALLENGE

Lower Valley Church has agreed to host a Rest Stop for the upcoming Bike MS Country Challenge which will start/finish in Clinton at the Spruce Run Recreation Area on Saturday, September 17th. Here is the link for to volunteer at our specific Rest Stop:

https://nmss.galaxydigital.com/need/detail/?need_id=705428



Volunteers make Bike MS possible through supporting a variety of areas on event day. To view all the available opportunities, click here:

[Opportunities | The National Multiple Sclerosis Society \(galaxydigital.com\)](https://nmss.galaxydigital.com/need/detail/?need_id=705428)

Volunteer Registration Instructions:

Please choose the one(s) that interest you by clicking on “view details” to the right of the opportunity and then click “respond” when you’re ready to sign-up. The system will prompt you to create an account with a password.

DON’S 30TH ANNIVERSARY/CELEBRATION

Over the last 30 years who has attended more Sunday worship services than anyone else?

If you guessed our faithful organist, Don Scafuri, you’d be right. On **September 25** we’ll be celebrating Don’s 30th anniversary as our organist. For much of that time Don also faithfully directed our chancel choir. We continue to enjoy Don’s musical artistry each week and are grateful for the many ways he illuminates our worship through music.

Come for worship, acknowledgement and gratitude for Don’s artistry and service and stay for a reception following worship. Maybe he’ll play us something extra special too.

We’d also like to request that you search out any photos you might have of Don through the years. He’s pretty good at hiding behind the organ, but somebody’s gotta have something from 30 years ago. If you have such a gem please reach out to Pastor Chad.

NEWS FROM MISSION

Tools 4 School

Mission collected school supplies for Hunterdon County students in need. Every year United Way of Hunterdon collects school supplies for children on the free and reduced lunch program in school districts within Hunterdon County. In 2021, we helped 800+ students from pre-K through 12th grade with filled backpacks to help them start the school year with the tools they need to succeed.



How does it work? During our annual drives, we engage with our community volunteers and donors to collect back-to-school supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers, earbuds, composition books, notebooks, folders, glue, etc. Through our school partnerships, we learn what supplies are needed for each grade level, and then assemble backpacks full of those grade-specific supplies for each student who applies.

LVPC church mission fund donated \$325 and many parishioners donated supplies. Thanks for your

support and a special thanks to Abby Ernst for organizing this and delivering the donated supplies to the United Way.

Update from Compassion International

Grace is a girl from Tanzania who lives in the region of Arusha. LVPC Mission has been providing hope and love to Grace as her sponsor since July 2016, through Compassion International. Grace is now 12 years old and growing spiritually, cognitively, and emotionally. In her last letter she shared that her family is doing well and she is advancing in her studies, starting sixth grade. Grace and Marilyn El-Zahr exchange letters. Her most recent photo and letter are posted on the Mission Bulletin Board. Grace ended her last letter with these words: "May God bless you and give you a long life".

YOUTH GROUP

High school youth group has begun 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.

GARDEN NEWS

Even as we struggled with a lack of rainfall this growing season, we were able to harvest a bounty of vegetables for the Food Pantry.



Late summer harvest from the Community Garden for the Open Cupboard Food Pantry

ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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 Exodus. 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.

FROM THE RENOVATION TEAM ...

You may have noticed, from the parking lot, our building has a different look these days. No, this is not the final plan from the architect, but it is part of the process. In preparation of repairing the back wall of the building by upgrading to real functioning windows in the library and preschool classrooms the rotting doors and door frames have been removed and preparation for some block work and stucco patches has been done. The new windows have been ordered and will be installed just as soon as they arrive. Keep your eyes on the progression of this work.

Additionally, but less visible, we will also be replacing some windows at the manse. We received a matching grant from the Presbytery for energy efficient upgrades to our manse. We hope to slowly make progress on this project each year. There are a lot of large windows over there. We can also thank Heartwood Homes and Construction (our contractor, many of you may know Stuart Solewater) for making this possible by donating the labor on this project.



Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Fellowship
September 4	Warren Newman	Jeb and Erin Edwards	Natalie Gast and Erin Edwards
September 11	Mike Reaves	Bobbie Sliker and Carl Weisman	Mike Reaves and Krista Jenkins
September 18	Mike Reaves	OPEN and OPEN	Karen Newman
September 25	Marilyn El-Zahr	Karen and Warren Newman	The Ernst Family
October 2	OPEN	OPEN and OPEN	Marilyn El-Zahr and Erin Edwards
October 9	Jeb Edwards	Marilyn and Al El-Zahr	Mike Reaves and Krista Jenkins
October 16	Warren Newman	Bobbie Sliker and Carl Weisman	Karen Newman
October 23	Judy Eckwielen	Jeb and Erin Edwards	The Ernst Family
October 30	Peggy Macaoay	Karen and Warren Newman	Madeleine Argue, Diane Staph, Cindy O’Keefe, Judy Eckwielen

**Please let Claudia know if you are able to serve in an OPEN spot.
Thanks!**

September 2022
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.