

Parish Happenings

April 2018

FROM PASTOR CHAD

Easter Tide is upon us and this naturally raises questions like: What is it about this story that grabs us? And what is it that grabbed so many faithful people before us?

In Luke's account of Jesus's resurrection the women return from the tomb with the news the tomb is empty and Jesus is alive and his best friends and closest confidants don't believe the story. The same men who have committed three years of their lives to Jesus' teaching dismiss the story of these women as "an idle tale" or "useless talk."



Because the Greek word translated "useless talk" is only used once in the entire New Testament it presents a translation challenge. J.B. Phillips chose to use "sheer imagination" in his translation of the passage and in *The Message* Eugene Peterson translates, "but the apostles didn't believe a word of it, thought they were making it all up." A preeminent Greek Lexicon used by New Testament scholars offers an alternate suggestion of, "humbug", which in the present day vernacular might come out more like "junk" or "crap", or more likely today, "fake news."

The point is that this story of Jesus's resurrection most certainly seemed like *fake news* to the people in the best position to joyfully believe it (we can't forget that Jesus had flat out told the disciples on several occasions that he was going to be killed and then be raised.) Even after all the disciples had been through with Jesus it wasn't reasonable to believe – at the first hearing and without proof. Peter would run to the tomb to see for himself and later Thomas would believe, but only after seeing and touching the resurrected Jesus.

So how is it that so many people in the first and second century came to believe, on faith alone, in the resurrection of Jesus and commit their lives to following him? Diana Butler Bass in her book, *A People's History of Christianity*, gives us a carefully researched answer to this question:

Christianity seems to have succeeded because it transformed the lives of people in a chaotic world. Indeed, in his study of the growth of Christianity in the ancient world, Rodney Stark suggests that

'The power of Christianity lay not in its promise of other worldly compensations for suffering in this life, as has so often been proposed. No, the crucial change that took place...was the rapidly spreading awareness of a faith that delivered potent antidotes to life's miseries here and now!'

Throughout the first five centuries people understood Christianity primarily as a way of life in the present, not as a doctrinal system, esoteric belief, or promise of eternal salvation. By followers enacting Jesus' teachings, Christianity changed and improved the lives of adherents and served as a practical spiritual pathway.*

The power of this story was in the resurrected lives of faithful Christians. They lived transformed lives and this was compelling testimony that many, rich and poor, were drawn to. Early writings from Christians and pagans attest to the radical lives of these believers.

“It is our care of the helpless, our practice of loving kindness that brands us in the eyes of our many opponents,” claimed the African theologian Tertullian. “‘Only look,’ they say, ‘look how they love one another!’”**

People actually followed Jesus. It was this reality that drew people to believe the wildly ridiculous story that even Jesus closest friends couldn’t believe without seeing. It is said that “seeing is believing.” In the early life of Christianity converts could see that those who called themselves Christians were different. Their care for the most vulnerable and unprecedented acts of love were on display and the Roman world took notice.

Two millennia have passed and this is still our story. We are still called to be people who live lives marked by the life and teachings of Jesus. The resurrection story is little more than *fake news* if there is no evidence of the radical love of Jesus in the lives of Christians.

I have no doubt that many of the empty pews in churches around our nation are a result of our failure to live fully in the light of the resurrection. Too many Christian voices in the last century have spoken words of hate rather than love and there has been far too big a gap between the words of Jesus we claim and our actions on behalf of the most vulnerable. We would do well to remember Jesus’s words in John 12:47, “for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.”

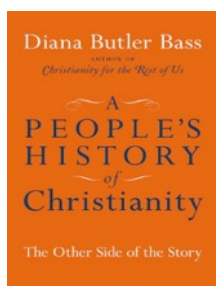
I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34&35

I can’t help but wonder what our story will be at Lower Valley. Will we grow more and more into a community that demonstrates the radical love and care that marked the lives of our thoroughly Christian ancestors? Can we learn to embrace the call of Jesus to “love one another”? How will our story be lived out right here in Hunterdon County?

Our history as a small rural church has no doubt been marked by the way we have cared for our congregation. As we change with the rapidly changing culture around us, we are called, once again, to find ways to demonstrate the radical love of Jesus to those outside our walls. Will we be the kind of community that demonstrates the saving love of Jesus to a broken world?

May the light of the resurrection illuminate our lives as we explore together these questions in the weeks ahead and as we consider what it means to be resurrection people this Easter Tide.



*A *People's History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story*, Diana Butler Bass; p. 26

**Bass, p. 64-65

Clare

MISSION NEWS

Movie Night

We are having our next movie night on **Friday, April 27th**. Come celebrate Earth Day and learn about global warming and climate change. We will be watching, "An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power" by Al Gore. We will have pizza and snacks at 6:30 p.m. with the movie starting at 7pm and discussion afterwards. Please join us!



COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

Parish Life is looking for some more people to sign up to help with Coffee and Conversation particularly for the 1st Sunday of the month, but help on any Sunday is most appreciated. Please see Renee Ollerenshaw, Lisa Coffaro or Lisamarie Boehm or email the church office at lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com

APPALACHIA SERVICE PROJECT (ASP) HAPPENINGS

ASP Soup Sales

Please support our upcoming summer ASP Mission Trip by purchasing delicious homemade soups made by our church families. Our group that travels with ASP is helping to keep those families less fortunate warmer, safer and drier! Look for members of our ASP team during Fellowship in the Parish Hall. Please contact Isabel Roppolo at isabelroppolo@yahoo.com or 908.319.0249 (call or text) with questions.

Camp Johnsonburg Summer Camp Registration

If you are planning on registering your child for summer camp at Johnsonburg, please follow these instructions:

Go to website to register. When you click on "make payment" it will ask if you have a coupon or transfer code. Say yes to transfer code. It will then ask you to select a box next to the camper's or campers' name to apply the code to and then you will enter our campership code **LowValPC18**

This will immediately apply the transfer of \$250 to the church and register your child/ren for the camp session. You can pay a portion or all of what is left for the camp program.

Upcoming Events

- *Spring Spruce Up Day – Saturday, April 28, 9 a.m - 4 p.m.*
Calling all helping hands! Come join us for a fun-filled day of service!! Put your faith into action, meet new people, and work with others as you assist us in preparing our facilities for summer. There's a job for every age and ability. More information about projects and what to bring will be provided when you register at www.campjburg.org. Click on the Register button and go from there.
- *Open House – Sunday, April 29, 2 -5:30 p.m.*
Take a tour and see the cabins, dining hall, lake, high rope elements and more. You will also meet some of our summer staff!! Questions? Call 908-852-2349

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Spiritual Formation of Children

The Spiritual Formation Team is reading *In God's Presence Encountering, Experiencing, and Embracing the Holy in Worship*. Our goal is to learn and grow in the ways we consider worship in order to enhance everyone's spiritual formation at LVPC. If you would like to read this book, contact Pastor Chad. If you would be interested in joining the Spiritual Formation Team, please contact any member: Kim Rodgers, Chad Rodgers, Sue Hostler, Krista Jenkins,

GiFT is going to have a new look this year! It promises to be an exciting program for families on four Sunday evenings in July. Dinner will be followed by a program for young adults and more mature adults, an activity for children, plus babysitting for the very young. Mark your calendar: July 1, 8, 22, and 29. If your vacation falls on one of these dates, don't be concerned, you are welcome to attend any or all of the sessions. We are excited that GiFT is back for everyone at Lower Valley.

Birthday Wishes

Please join us in wishing Ruth Paradise a very happy birthday! Thank you to Susan Jackson for sharing this wonderful celebration photo of Ruth!



As Sunday School winds down, we look forward to the 3,4,5 grade class leading worship on April 15. The last day of SS class will be May 20. On June 3, worship will be in the park, and will include the confirmation of some of our young people.

Blake Haggerty, Linda Stetler. We meet once a month in the evening. Our focus for the past seven years has been on the spiritual formation of our children and we have just recently expanded to the spiritual formation of everyone in our church. We'd love to have your input.



FRIDAY, APRIL 13
6:00PM

LOWER VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH | CALIFON

FREE
YOGA

ALL AGES | ALL ABILITIES



BRING A YOGA MAT OR BLANKET

We are looking for church members
(of any age) who would like to
contribute something to our
newsletter. Share your experiences,
your memories and your hopes for
LVPC. We want to hear from you.
E-mail Claudia at
lowervalleypc@embarqmail.com.

Pastor Chad's Contact info:

Cell phone: 908.892.0044
E-mail: revchadrodgers@gmail.com

Church Info:

Claudia Gilbert: Church Administrator
Phone: 908-832-2933
E-mail: lowervalleypc@embarqmail.com
Website: www.lowervalley.org

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

Session Members

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Renee Ollerenshaw: 832-7250/Jems101992@gmail.com

Karen Newman (clerk): 638-4332/kjnewman115@gmail.com

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
April 1 — Easter Sunday	Marilyn El-Zahr	Karen and Warren Newman	Warren Newman Karen Newman Sue Hostler Kim Rodgers
April 8	Judy Eckwielen	Lisa Coffaro and Isabel Roppolo	
April 15	4th & 5th Graders	4th & 5th Graders	
April 22	OPEN	Jennifer Kozak and Madeleine Argue	
April 29	Marilyn El-Zahr	Lisamarie Boehm and Rich Ehrlich	
May 6	Dick Kline	Judy Eckwielen and OPEN	Warren Newman OPEN OPEN OPEN
May 13	Warren Newman	The El-Zahrs	
May 20 — Pentecost	OPEN	OPEN OPEN	
May 27 — Family Worship	Rachel Gast	Lisamarie Boehm and Jennifer Kozak	

Please let the office know if you are able to serve in one of the OPEN spots

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830
April 2018

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.