

Parish Happenings

February 2017

FROM PASTOR CHAD

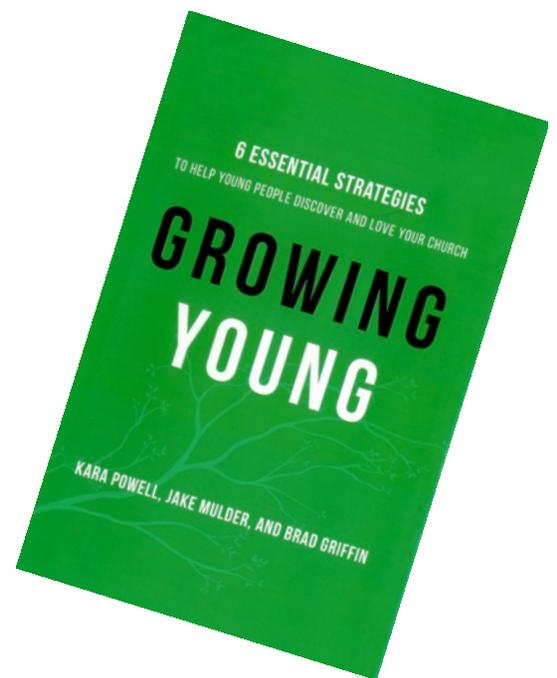
Fuel a Warm Community: *Warm is the New Cool*

We've made it to chapter 5 of *Growing Young* and though it seems a bit less challenging than some of the previous chapters we would do well to think carefully about warmth. I don't think we, LVPC, needed this book to tell us what we intuitively know to be true, but the reminder is important and this chapter holds a couple warnings that are worth our careful attention.

When the *Growing Young* team parsed their research on churches growing young they discovered that carefully structured small group, youth group, bible study, and fellowship programs did not lead to lasting close relationships. These things did not guarantee a church would sustain their connections to young people. In many churches, having too many programs actually made churches feel less warm. Unnecessary busyness can often be a distraction from building authentic community.

What does lead to authentic community? Those things that promote a feeling of "warmth." "Warmth often lives much deeper than your programs and structures – it's the lifeblood coursing through the veins of your church body." (p. 166) So, if "warm is the new cool" (I actually think warm has always been cool, but church growth trends in the last 30 years focused on programs and strategies more often than something unquantifiable like warmth) what does it look like to foster warmth?

If we were all to read this chapter we'd feel like LVPC is already a good ways down the road to emphasizing a warmth that is both inviting to young people and a sustaining force for our



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community. Our worship is inviting, not overly formal, and feels somewhat informal (like a living room) while maintaining a sense of the sacred. We are an intergenerational community and we've worked to creatively invite children and young people into our worship services. Our youth genuinely feel like LVPC is home and in some cases their friends (whose families don't attend our church) feel the same.

There are of course many ways we can do better. In my sermon last Sunday I brought up some of the ways we could not only be more “of one mind” (to use the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1), but develop a deeper sense of community. In *Growing Young* the authors suggest the following “Actions to Emphasize”:

- Helping new people land quickly
- Praying warmly (we’ve got work to do here)
- A focus on a shared community (shared life of the community is far more attractive than the preaching, the building, or the style of worship)

While working towards being a close and warm community it is also important to be aware of the potential pitfalls. I think smaller churches, especially, must be careful that the closeness of their community doesn’t lead to being a closed community. Being small and “tight knit” mustn’t become an idol that gets in the way of ongoing authentic hospitality. We must always continue to extend the warmth of our community to everyone who enters our doors. Young people are looking for authentic community and authentic community starts with the kind of warmth that feels like family.

Whether or not LVPC is a warm community that feels like a place young people can call home depends on each one of us. We are all called to deepen our sense of connection to our church family. If you’ve hesitated to jump into life at LVPC then now is the time. Don’t wait for a program or a structure: invite someone to your house to share a meal, attend a sporting event or concert that our students are involved in at their school, or come up with your own creative means of building the warm community we want to foster.



EVENING CIRCLE

Women’s Bible Study will meet on Wednesday, February 15th 7:00 p.m. Getz Library. We will be studying the last lesson in “Reconciling Paul” which is lesson 9, “A Call to Apostleship in the Twenty-First Century”. We will be starting a new Bible Study in March. Please join our small friendly group. Any questions please call Joni 908-391-6263 or Nancy 908-310-1748.

WORSHIP

Ash Wednesday Service

Join us Wednesday, March 1st at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary at Fairmount Presbyterian Church in Tewksbury as we journey together through song, prayer, reflection, and the imposition of ashes. This is a joint worship project of the Lower Valley and Fairmount Presbyterian Churches.

JOHNSONBURG WINTER FUN DAY!

Join in the fun on Saturday, February 4th from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for a wonderful day filled with winter fun! Bring your family and friends to the place you love for hot cocoa around the fire and season outdoor activities which will include snow or grass sledding, Hungry Hippos in the gym, snowball fights (with mud or snow)! Price is \$10 and includes a tasty homemade lunch. Call the office at 908-852-2349 or email to office@campjburg.org to let them know you are coming!

“FAITH AND POLITICS”

Join us for a new group that will explore the intersection between faith and politics. We will begin by looking at scripture, specifically the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5, and discuss what we as Christians are called to stand for in our world. Using that as our base we will explore topics the group would like to discuss and learn more about. Using books, videos, and guest speakers we will shape our views and opinions and discover ways to act on them. Of highest importance will be the emphasis on respect so we can create an environment where honest questions can be asked, with the ultimate goal being to draw us as a Christian community closer to the heart of God and communicate that to our community and world. We will begin meeting on Sunday, Feb. 5th between 11:45-12 and ending at 1:00. From there we will meet every 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month.

Is it really a good idea to mix faith and politics?

My article in our January newsletter was a brief summary of chapter 4 in *Growing Young – Take Jesus’ Message Seriously: What’s Young about the Good News*. If we are going to be a

who God is to have concern for all people who are affected by political outcomes. God’s prophets were called to political action and when they spoke truth to power those words had political fall out. Many were persecuted for speaking God’s truth, but as a result Kings changed their minds, and some even repented of their sin.



community that *takes Jesus’ message seriously* then the intersection of faith and politics is inevitable. It was Jesus who said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Loving enemies and praying for our oppressors are political acts.

However, the intersection of faith and politics is not just about Jesus (he is after all doing the will of his father). It is at the center of biblical ethics and at the the center of

It was Jeremiah the prophet who spoke the following words to the King of Judah,

Thus says the LORD:
Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place. (Jeremiah 22:3)

To be called by God (and all of us who claim to be Christian are called) is to use our voice to demand that the powers of this world “act with justice and

righteousness.” The book of Proverbs makes God’s desires quite explicit,

Speak out for those who
cannot speak,
for the rights of all the destitute.
Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor
and needy.
(Proverbs 31:8-9)

These passages only scratch the surface of the recurring biblical mandate that makes engaging in political discourse an unavoidable calling for anyone who would take up their cross and follow Jesus.

There can and will be disagreement among faithful people, with respect to how particular policies may or may not move us toward justice, but there can be no doubt that God is calling us to carry God’s concerns into our lives and thus into our world.

There are many different ways that this can be done and we have different gifts that God intends us to use for this purpose. So, for some it may mean running for political office (over the years many in our church have held elected offices in our local governments), for others it might mean advocacy, and for still others it may mean simply voting with a careful ear to the witness of scripture.

However, this may look for each of us as individuals, we must find ways of talking to one another while maintaining the “unity in Christ” that the Apostle Paul is speaking about in 1 Corinthians 1:10. While it is not the goal of a conversation about faith and politics to cause further division and hard feelings it could be a risk if we don’t commit to biblical mandate of love. I am convinced that a community of faith cannot be deterred from its calling by fear and will only grow deeper by entering into these conversations together.



FROM THE FINANCE TEAM

Stewardship Campaign

It’s not too late to return your pledge card in the envelope that was provided (either mail or place in offering plate) or e-mail Rich Ehrlich, our Financial Secretary at rehlich@embarqmail.com. Thank you!

Per Capita

One of the new things you have received as the New Year begins is your new set of offering envelopes. You may have noticed an envelope near the front of the box labeled “per capita.” Like many

Presbyterians, you may have wondered, “Exactly what does per capita do?”

Per capita is an amount of money per member (this year, \$35) that our congregation pays to our larger Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This money is part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. It is the money that enables us to work with other Presbyterian churches in our presbytery and across the country. It is also money that allows us to work with other churches to further the mission of Jesus Christ around the world.

We do not believe in being lone rangers in the PC(USA). We need each other as we work together to share the good news of Jesus Christ. As we benefit from the gifts, skills, vision, and ministry of each other in this place, so, too, do we benefit from an even wider array of gifts and ministry of our Presbyterian brothers and sisters across the church. Your per capita pays for the programs, training, and resources that help us work together and discern the mind of Christ for the PC(USA).

Thank you to all of you who have already paid your share of \$35. By contributing your portion of per capita, you have freed up dollars in our regular budget for the work of our congregation in this

community. If you haven't yet contributed, we hope you will consider doing so.

THANK YOU FROM THE SLIKER FAMILY

The entire Sliker, O'Dell, Milligan, Eichlin and Williamson families would like to thank the Lower Valley Presbyterian Church family and friends for your sympathy, kindness and support after Gen's passing. She so loved the church. Words cannot express our gratitude for everyone who helped with the reception, before, during and after, following her services. A special thank you to Rev. Chad for the wonderful service he preached. You did Gen proud!

Bruce Sliker

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Spiritual Formation of Children

The team has begun plans for this year's GiFT program. Mark the dates on your calendar: July 9-13. Stay tuned to the announcements in church. The 6/7/8 grade class has already given one

reminder, and you may well see them again!

The 4/5 grade class recently wrote a letter to the church members as part of their lesson:

Dear Brothers and Sisters of LVPC,

We are sending you Peace and Love from the Lord Jesus Christ. We are learning about faith and fellowship. We pray for you to be strong until the end of eternity. We wish you well and to enjoy Peace.

Sincerely,

4/5 grade SS class

Men's Bible Study

It's always a great time to join our Men's Fellowship Group! We are studying the Gospel of Luke. We meet on Saturday mornings from 8-9:30 a.m. If you are interested, have questions or would like a study guide see Pastor Chad.

APPALACHIA SERVICE PROJECT (ASP) HAPPENINGS

Homemade Soups!!

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!



Get the newsletter via e-mail so you can enjoy the full color version and help us cut down on paper and postage costs! Call or e-mail Claudia in the office — 832-2933 or lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com

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Phone: 908-832-2933

E-mail: lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com

Website: www.lowervalley.org

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

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Karen Newman (clerk): 638-4332/karennewman@embarqmail.com

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
February 5	Nancy Knight	The El-Zahr Family	Terry Hoffman Stephanie Donlon OPEN OPEN
February 12	Terry Hoffman	Cindy and Tim O'Keefe	
February 19 — Family Worship	OPEN	Sophie Gast Madeleine Argue	
February 26	Christina Wilson	Renee and Jeff Ollerenshaw	
March 5	Lisamarie Boehm	Rich Ehrlich Madeleine Argue	Wendy Garcia OPEN OPEN OPEN
March 12	OPEN	Terry Hoffman Ed Getz	
March 19 — Family Worship	4/5 Graders	4/5 Graders	
March 26	Abby Ernst	Cindy and Tim O'Keefe	

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

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830
February 2017

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.