

## From Pastor Chad

### Between Heaven and Earth

In his book *Simply Christian* N. T. Wright says that, “We are called to live at the overlap both of heaven and earth — the earth that has yet to be fully redeemed as one day it will be — and of God’s future and this world’s present.” This is a common theme in his writing which is rooted in scripture and in the prayer Jesus gave as a model: *Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* I think it is safe to say that a great deal of our prayers come back to this very idea. I’m certain it is the healing, the peace, and the wisdom of heaven that we are longing to see on earth.

Our prayers bring us to the intersection where heaven and earth meet and where it is hard to tell the difference between the two. Very naturally we find this is a rather strange place to find ourselves. The streets aren’t familiar and there is not GPS to guide us.

For several years now our Session has been exploring our worship practices: why we do what we do, what might we be missing, how can we adapt to a changing culture, how can we be welcoming and inviting to all the generations in our congregation, and many other similar questions. One area where we felt the need to stretch and grow has been how we pray. The last fifty years of worship in main line American Protestant churches has been fairly static. Even though Richard Foster explores twenty-one different types of prayer, in his book *Prayer, Finding the Heart’s True Home* (and I don’t expect he would claim for a minute that the undertaking was even an attempt to make an exhaustive list), we’ve been basically praying the same in worship for 50 years (and we’d probably find much longer than that if I were to actually do my homework).

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So, we’ve experimented a little: using the chant style music of the Taizé, silence, small group prayer, psalms, and songs of confession. Sometimes it has been uncomfortable, sometimes awkward, sometimes it has grown on us, and sometimes it has awakened new life in us. None of our explorations have lead to a deeper connection to God or a deeper grasp of the intersection between heaven and earth for everyone, but all of them have been helpful to some. It is similar to our experience of music — not all of our souls are stirred by the same music.

Prayer, when we get down to it is an intimate, uncomfortable, awkward, and unexplainable experience even when we are alone in our bedrooms. For these reasons we don’t talk about it, try to explain it, or share much about it with others.

I was recently reading some essays on prayer, with a small group of people in our congregation, and one author confronted us with the idea that he was probably more comfortable talking about his “sex life” than “his prayer life.” Take a moment to ponder that along with the previous paragraph. The two do have quite a bit in common. If we’re really honest we can recognize that our discomfort with praying and discussing prayer is

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pretty much the same as discussing the birds and the bees with our children or anyone else for that matter.

We are certainly not the first people to make a comparison between sex and prayer. There are traces of it in the theology of Genesis. You'll also find the two languages mingled in the poetry of Song of Songs and the writing of the Christian mystics because at the heart of both is a love relationship. "The Trinity, is our everlasting lover," wrote Julian of Norwich in the fourteenth century.

I don't know anyone who claims to have figured prayer out. I don't know anyone who would be arrogant enough to make such a claim even if they thought they had figured it out. Our relationship with God is always a work in progress and prayer is at the heart of that work. So, we're going to keep exploring prayer in worship. I don't expect we'll find a silver bullet prayer formula that is deeply meaningful for every last person and can be repeated week after week for the next 50 years, but we'll find a rhythm of practices that challenge us and lead us further into the intersection of heaven and earth.

Most likely we were all taught "practice makes perfect." Though we cannot practice prayer enough in our lifetimes to reach anything close to perfection it would be wise to heed the advice that Richard Foster gives:

*Healthy prayer necessitates frequent experiences of the common, earthy, run-of-the-mill variety. Like walks, and talks, and good wholesome laughter. Like work in the yard, and chitchat with the neighbors, and washing windows. Like loving our spouse, and playing with our kids, and working with our colleagues. To be spiritually fit to scale the Himalayas of the spirit, we need regular exercise in the hills and valleys of ordinary life.*

— Richard Foster

Ordinary life, as it turns out, is the very place to try out, to exercise, and to practice prayer.

Lent is upon us and so, the traditional season of depravity. Why not fill the space vacated, by what we've given up, with a renewed commitment to living prayerfully at the intersection — "of God's future and this world's present" — where we find ourselves each morning when we wake up.

May this Lenten season be a new opportunity to expand and deepen our experience of prayer



together.

### **NEW! Men's Fellowship**

Men of all ages are invited to join our new Men's Fellowship group which meets on Saturday mornings from 8 - 9:30 a.m.

### **Evening Circle**

The next meeting of the Evening Circle will be held at **7 p.m. on Wed., March 19<sup>th</sup>, in the Getz Library**. We will be continuing our Bible study, using the Presbyterian Women's guide called "An Abiding Hope: The Presence of God in Exodus and Deuteronomy." All women are invited; there is no obligation to attend every month. Drop in and see what you've been missing! We bring simple snacks to share and put on the tea kettle. We share prayer requests and pray, in addition to studying the Bible and discussing how we can use what we learn in our own lives. The March lesson will be based on **Exodus 13:17-15:21**, "Passing through the waters." Please bring your prayer shawls, too, so we can share our progress! If the weather is bad, please call Joni Nodes (236-7996) or Nancy Knight (537-4347) before traveling to the church, since the meeting might be postponed or cancelled.

### **Prayer Shawl Ministry**

On Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>, six members of Lower Valley Presbyterian Church gathered to learn about a Prayer Shawl Ministry. Darlene Tapie, a member of the Blairstown Presbyterian Church, and the representative for our Alternative Gift Fair's Kenyan Projects table last November, came to "show and tell." She traveled to Kenya last July to begin a Prayer Shawl Ministry there, and our Evening and Afternoon Circles made a financial contribution to help purchase yarn in Kenya. Darlene visited 5 churches, a prison, and a seminary. She met with about 175 women in all during the 30 days that she was there. She was able to negotiate with Kenyan businessmen to be able to buy yarn on an ongoing basis at their wholesale prices, while buying a smaller quantity than they usually require — 25 cases instead of 50 — still a great deal of yarn! Darlene told our members about the Prayer Shawl Ministry that the Blairstown

Church has had for many years. Some of the shawls are knitted, and some are crocheted. She had two whole books of patterns; we selected 3 to start. The idea of the ministry can be summed up in the card that accompanies a shawl when it is given away. The card that the Blairstown church uses says: "Our Prayer: May God's grace be upon this shawl, warming, comforting, enfolding and embracing you. May this mantle be a safe haven...a sacred place of security and well being. May you be cradled in hope, kept in joy, graced with peace, and wrapped in love. Blessed be." Inside the card reads, "This shawl passed through praying hands and has been blessed by our loving hearts. This shawl was made especially for you by the Prayer Shawl Ministry of [the church's name]."

Darlene said sometimes the women gather to knit or crochet, and they light a candle and open their meeting with prayer. Other women work on their own at home, also praying as they create shawls. Members of the church let the women know when they hear of someone who could use some comfort, hope and prayers, and the shawls are sent to them when they are finished. The main basic guideline is

this: prayer shawls are never sold. Contributions can be made to help purchase yarn, but no one can buy a shawl, even to give away. After our meeting with Darlene, three additional women asked for patterns and want to knit shawls. If you would like to join in on this ministry, please let Joni Nodes (236-7996) or Nancy Knight (537-4347) know. At this time, women are making the



shawls at home, but future group sessions are definitely possible. This ministry can expand in many ways, as God leads. If you know of someone who is going through a difficult time and who could use a prayer shawl, please let us know.

### **From the Finance Team** ***What is Per Capita?***

You may have noticed an expense of \$4,060 in our budget, called Per Capita. Per Capita is LVPC's assessment from the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) to maintain our

structure of governance and connectedness. Per Capita is assessed at \$32.22 per church member and is divided among the General Assembly, Synod and Presbytery.

### ***What do Per Capita dollars provide?***

More specifically, per capita funding covers expenses related to holding the General Assembly meeting, bringing together church leaders for training events, developing and administering ordination exams, producing the *Book of Order*, and maintaining a Presbyterian presence at ecumenical groups and gatherings worldwide. On a more local level, Newton Presbytery uses per capita funding for administrative, building, and salary costs that help it to pursue its constitutionally required activities along with its mission to promote healthy congregations and community.

### ***Why should I pay Per Capita?***

Paying per capita is similar to contributing one's dish to a potluck meal or paying to be connected to the internet. In essence, per capita is part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. This is important; let's try to raise the funds to cover our per capita expense this year! If you have not done so, please pay your family's (LVPC members only) portion of the per capita expense, and designate it as such on your check or envelope.

### **Community Garden**

Come Garden With Your Friends and Neighbors!

We will again be hosting a community garden open to the public. Last year was a huge success! Registration forms are available on the church website and beds go fast, so register soon. There is a \$25 fee per bed. We are hoping to open the garden on April 5<sup>th</sup> so we can all get our peas and lettuce in early.

### **Children's Ministry**

Our winter has been a cold snowy time, but the Pre, K, 1st Sunday School class with Liz Burns has been busy this month. They have learned what it is like to live in kindness, and they have been learning of the love that God has for all of them. One Sunday each child dropped a small object into some water and told how they might be a blessing to someone else. They are actually experiencing how blessings move from person to person by continuing to send cards to Lorraine Hintz who is homebound. The children have learned to sign Yes, Jesus, Love and Me. They enjoy singing Jesus Loves Me and signing it together. Drop by their classroom to see the prayer webs that the kids have woven.

If you weren't thinking spring last month, you surely are now! Mark your calendars with the following important information for spring and summer:

### **Sunday School Teacher**

**Breakfast:** April 5, 9 a.m. –

Noon: If you believe you might be interested in teaching Sunday School next year, please join us at the brunch to find out about our program. There will be a guest speaker Rev. Sharyl Dixon, Pastor of Kingston (NJ) Presbyterian Church. Let Linda Stetler know if you are planning to attend.

**VBS Plus+:** July 13-17, (Training Program on May 4 and May 18): Year two of VBS Plus+ is in the works. This is Bible School for all generations with or without children. More information to follow, but reserve the dates for good food and fellowship.

**Camp Johnsonburg:** There are scholarships available for our kids to attend Camp Johnsonburg this summer. Find out more about this Presbyterian Camp in New Jersey at their website: [www.campjburg.org](http://www.campjburg.org).

Our children have been enjoying the stage area during coffee and conversation. Thanks to everyone who has helped by donating and by cleaning up each week. The kids love playing with the toys and each other, however, some toys have mysteriously appeared and are not age appropriate for all. Please check with Kim Rodgers before donating any toys to the stage. The Spiritual Formation Team is spring cleaning soon and making

the stage a safe playing area once again.

### **Gathering Prayer of the 4th-5<sup>th</sup> grade class:**

*Leader: The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

*All: And also with you.*

*Leader: Let us pray. Gracious and loving God, we are grateful for times when we can come together to discover more about you. Open our hearts and minds to recognize the ways you are calling us to follow you. Amen.*

### **The BRAB group (Building Relationships Around Books)**

We are a group of ladies that meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday evening of each month. We enjoy snacks & wine while having an informal & lively discussion on member-chosen books. For more info, please contact Kim Rodgers at [chadandkimrodgers@gmail.com](mailto:chadandkimrodgers@gmail.com).

### **The Califon Moms**

Moms with young children get together weekly to talk, support each other & let the kids interact/play. We usually meet in the mornings one day a week at parks or one another's homes. This group was started by a few ladies at LVPC, but has branched out to include other moms in the Califon area. If you'd like to join us, contact Natalie Gast at [gast.natalie@gmail.com](mailto:gast.natalie@gmail.com).

### **Newsletter Options**

Please help us save on postage and copier paper costs by receiving the newsletter via e-mail. Also, by receiving an e-mail version, you will be able to enjoy any photos in color! If interested please e-mail Claudia at: [lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com](mailto:lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com). The newsletter can also be viewed on our webpage: [www.lowervalley.org](http://www.lowervalley.org).

### **Parish Life**

We'd like to invite everyone to come to Easter sunrise service on April, 20<sup>th</sup> at LVPC. Breakfast will be served after worship in the Parish Hall. We are looking for some early risers who would be able to help prepare breakfast. Or, if you'd like to make something and drop it off Saturday that would be great too. Time for the service will be announced in April.

A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the wonderful time we share at Coffee and Conversation. Thanks to those who set up, clean up, bake, cook, bring food and drink and most of all everyone who comes. It's become a great way to get to know each other. And, now give thanks at the beginning of each meal.

If you have any questions about the above you can contact Lisa Coffaro at [coffaro423@comcast.net](mailto:coffaro423@comcast.net) or (973)713-4870.

### **Soup for Sale!**

Our Soup Sale to benefit our ASP volunteers' expenses and work in Tennessee this July continues during Fellowship **through the end of March**. Please help support this wonderful program to make homes safe, warm and dry for our neighbors in Appalachia.

### **Join us for Fellowship!**

Come and get to know your church family at Coffee & Conversation every Sunday after service in the Parish Hall. Eat, talk and let your kids have fun. Help support this fun time by sharing the load. Set up, bake, bring a favorite dish or help clean up. Sign up at the table in the Parish Hall.

### **Offering Envelopes**

Please remember to pick up your 2014 offering envelopes from the table in the narthex.

### **Monthly Calendar**

This month's calendar can be found on our website: [www.lowervalley.org](http://www.lowervalley.org)

### **Ash Wednesday Service**

Join us Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm at Fairmount Presbyterian Church (247 Old Turnpike Rd. Califon) as we journey together through song, prayer, reflection, and the imposition of ashes. This is a joint worship project of the Lower Valley, Fairmount, and Musconetcong Valley Presbyterian Churches.

**Easter Flower Order Form**  
(orders are due with payment by 4/15)

If you would like to order Easter Flowers to decorate our sanctuary, please fill out the order form below and drop it in the offering plate or send it to the church office. Please indicate the desired quantity and enclose payment with your order.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Flower	Price	Qty	Total Cost
Mini Daffodil	\$2.60	_____	_____
Daffodil (6")	\$5.50	_____	_____
Easter Lily (4-5 blooms)	\$7.50	_____	_____
Tulip (6 blooms)	\$5.00	_____	_____
Tulip (8 blooms)	\$8.25	_____	_____

**Church Info:**

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.

**Pastor Chad's Contact info:**

Cell phone: 892.0044

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

**Art Table Schedule for Family Worship**

3/16: Isabel Roppolo and Lisa Coffaro

4/20: Kim Rodgers, Natalie Gast and Linda Stetler

5/25: Donna and Erika Leddie

**Children's Message Schedule**

3/23: Kyle Garcia

4/27: Ron Schildge

5/18: Tracy Heuneman

# Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers	Fellowship Host(s)
March 2	Sue Huntington	Terry Hoffman	Sue Huntington Linda Setter Warren Newman Lisa Coffaro	Wilson Zeiner Ernst
March 9	Stephanie Donlon	Terry Hoffman Ed Getz		
March 16 Family Worship	Warren Newman	Lisa Coffaro Isabel Roppolo		
March 23	<b>OPEN</b>	<b>OPEN</b> <b>OPEN</b>		
March 30	<b>OPEN</b>	Madeleine Argue Anne Underhill		
April 6	Warren Newman	Karen and Warren Newman		
April 13 Palm Sunday	Dick Kline	Janet and Gary Kipp		
April 20 Easter Sunday Family Worship	Judy Eckwielen	Cindy and Tim O'Keefe		
April 27	Stephanie Donlon	<b>OPEN</b> <b>OPEN</b>		

**If you are able to serve in an OPEN spot please contact the church office.**

**If you are unable to serve in an assigned spot please try your best to find a substitute and let the office know of any changes. Thanks so much!**

March 2014

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.