

Discipleship and Stewardship

As I enter my sixth fall serving as pastor at Lower Valley I'm reminded of several approaches we've taken to our annual "stewardship season." All of those have been rather subtle; they've included a few sermons on the topic, a newsletter article, and a well crafted letter from our finance team.

We've always stressed how helpful it is, for planning and executing a budget, when people make a pledge for the coming year. And, our congregation has responded well. If you look us up on the denominational website (www.pcusa.org) you'll see that our annual giving per member and annual giving per worship attendee meets the national average for all PC (U.S.A.) congregations.

In past years I've suggested that, though we're drawing attention to pledging money to make the budget work, our real focus is responding to Jesus' words, "Take up your cross and follow me."

For where your time is spent,
there your heart will be also.

— Jesus?

Supporting our shared ministry with our money is one way we respond to God's generosity toward us and acknowledge that everything we have is a gift from God. Scripture is quite clear that our wealth doesn't belong to us, but is a gift that is intended to be used for God's purposes. I'm glad to be part of a congregation that believes (belief proven in past action)

that together we are working towards God's purposes.

It will continue to be important for each of us to faithfully, and prayerfully consider how much we will pledge to this congregation in the coming year. During the month of October our Sunday worship will focus on scripture passages and themes that, I hope, will challenge us in this area of our discipleship.

It is certainly true as Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." However, I believe that we can't just talk about money and in fact it might be even more important to rephrase Jesus' words for our present age.

I think today Jesus might say, "For where your time is spent, there your heart will be also." If we are going to be people who truly and faithfully follow Jesus we must take very seriously how we spend our time. There are many faithful people teaching Sunday school, organizing our fellowship, taking care of the bills, keeping the building standing, and serving in other areas of our congregational life and mission and

The Church is not a volunteer organization. The Church is made up of 'disciples'.

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yet, though I don't have a scientific study to prove it, I would bet that our congregation is like most: 20% of the people are doing 80% of the work to carry out our mission.

It might be very challenging this fall if each of us were to take an assessment of our time or even go so far as to make a budget (sort of like budgeting our finances). What would happen if we started asking some of the following questions:

Do I spend more time watching my child's sporting events than I do meeting the needs of the poor?

Do I spend more time entertaining myself and my family than I do listening to those in need?

Does my yard get more attention than neighbors who need to experience the love of Christ through me?

Is my job so demanding that there is no time left for discipleship?

Do I spend more time browsing Facebook than I do reflecting on scripture?

The thing is discipleship is about following Jesus. It is more than showing up on Sunday morning for 65 minutes of worship and 30 minutes of coffee time. Discipleship is the time we spend encouraging a neighbor, meeting the needs of the poor, sharing Christ's love with a listening ear, sitting with someone who no longer has the physical capacity to leave their home or hospital room, and bravely sacrificing our own comforts to carry out God's work in the world.

I look forward to sharing in this challenge throughout the fall and beyond.



Open Cupboard Food Pantry

Looking for a Vera Bradley purse? Sporting equipment? A crystal vase, or a book, or maybe a new outfit? Have you tried the Open Cupboard Food Pantry Thrift Shop in Clinton? The food pantry

serves 569 people in the northern part of Hunterdon County each month. Food donations are supplemented with purchases made from the proceeds made at the thrift shop as well as monetary donations. Ninety-one volunteers at the thrift shop and food pantry faithfully spend hours each week for this wonderful program.

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church donates food on a regular basis – through the community garden and food collected each month. Visit www.opencupboardfoodpantry.org for hours, how to participate, what are the current needs. Donations of food can be delivered in the rear of the building during hours of operation and thrift shop donations are accepted up until 1/2 hour before closing. Hours are different each day — so check the web site. Success is due to the continuing support of the community.

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 all our photos in color! If you are interested please e-mail Claudia at: lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com. The newsletter can also be viewed on our webpage: www.lowervalley.org.

Church Directory

Please let the office know if you have any changes to the June edition of the church directory. We hope to distribute an updated version in the next month or so. Also, we are missing photos for many of you, so please e-mail or drop off a photo to the church office. If you didn't receive a copy of the directory and would like one please let Claudia in the office know and one can be sent to you.

Session Profiles — Part 3

We thought it would be a good idea for our Session members to give you a short profile of their responsibilities. Here are more:

Kim Rodgers: A couple of years ago we changed the name of the committee for Children's Ministry to be the team for the Spiritual

Formation of Children. We felt like this title described a shift in our focus, from filling the kids with information about the Bible to including faith practices and connection with God as well. My role on Session is to be a liaison between Session and this team. Currently our team meets once a month. We read a book together to help further our own understanding of faith at an adult level, which we then try to incorporate into what we plan for our children. We focus on providing Sunday School teachers with resources they need in order to lead their classes well, reminding them that they don't need to have all the answers but encourage the kids to pursue a relationship with God and to look for God's presence in their lives. We also incorporate Family Worship each month so our whole church family can worship together. It's very important for the kids to feel comfortable in worship, and more importantly, to feel welcome! Our church definitely does that and the kids can sense it. Game Night

occurs each month, which is a way for us to encourage the very-important aspect of having multi-generational relationships. If you would like to learn more about what our team does, just ask Linda Stetler, Natalie Gast, or me. We would love for you to join our conversations each month!

Stephanie Donlon: As part of the finance and stewardship team I work with the treasurer to oversee the finances of the church. This includes running a stewardship campaign to raise funds necessary to cover the annual operating costs of our church. Our team then creates and monitors the church budget each year based on the campaign results and projected operating expenses. We also work to preserve church savings and monitor the dispensation of special monetary gifts.

Wendy Garcia has been on session since January 2013. Wendy grew up in Lebanon Township and was a part of LVPC as a child through her high school years. After a hiatus, she and her husband,

Kyle, have recently become members together. Wendy lives in Long Valley with Kyle and their two children Sarah (age 10) and John (age 5). Wendy has also just begun her third year of teaching the 2nd/3rd grade class of Sunday School. Most of her work on session has been focused on congregational care.

Children's Ministry

Sunday School has begun; children's voices fill the halls of the classroom wing. The Pre, K, 1, class made pictures and cards for Lorraine Hintz who is homebound. They plan to continue making things for her as the year progresses. The 2nd and 3rd grade faces are peering through one of the portholes outside their classroom. Take a look at the eager smiling kids in that class. The 4th/5th class once again is earning and giving money for Juliette Joshua from Tanzania, Africa. They have learned that it takes planning to embrace causes bigger than themselves, and that they can dedicate their time and energy to make a difference. It is not too late to

join our Sunday School kids in their quest to learn more about God's love for them. Everyone is welcome.

The Journey and The Channel groups have begun meeting. If you are in high school, come join The Journey on Sunday evenings at the Rodgers home. The Channel, for kids in 6th, 7th, 8th grade, meets on Wednesday evenings in the parish hall. All kids are invited to join the discussion and fun.

Our next Game Night will be on **Saturday, October 26th at 6 p.m.**, in the parish hall. Plan on bringing a dish to share. Also bring your favorite game to play with others. All ages are welcome.

Community Garden Harvest Festival — Sunday October 6th, 4-7 p.m.

Join us for one last blast in the garden!! Please bring a potluck dish to share. We will provide water, coffee and cider. Please feel free to bring other potables for your family and friends to share. We will be organizing a kids craft, so

please let us know how many children will attend.

RSVP to Lyn Magee (lynmagic@gmail.com) and Judy Salisbury (salink2@embarqmail.com).

We also need help with set-up and clean-up.

Lower Valley Community Garden Update

Once again, the Lower Valley Community Garden has been going strong all summer long and has produced bountiful harvests for many. A joint venture between the town of Califon and LVPC, the garden now boasts 44 raised bed gardens, 8 of which are dedicated to growing produce for the Open Cupboard Food Pantry. The other beds are rented for a nominal fee by members of our congregation and residents of our local communities. The newest garden beds were constructed and filled last spring by volunteers from LVPC and local townspeople; local organizations and individuals continue to generously contribute goods and services to bring the

garden to what it is today. If you stroll by, you'll note a 'critter fence' around the garden designed to keep out wildlife large and small, as well as water stanchions located across the center of the garden. By and large, the fence has worked pretty well though, Pastor Chad recently noticed a very large ground hog who has taken up residence inside the fence! We are trying to relocate him!

Our little red shed has been great for storing tools, extra seeds, storage equipment, etc., and this year we added a refrigerator to store harvested produce before its delivery at OCFP.

The 8 raised beds for the Open Cupboard Food Pantry have produced hundreds of pounds of produce over the summer, including tomatoes (lots!), potatoes, beans, beets, radishes, Swiss chard, onions, and herbs. Volunteers usually meet on Mondays to harvest what has ripened during the week and one of the 3 garden managers delivers the produce

to the food pantry on Tuesdays.

Volunteers have also been responsible for watering and weeding the gardens, staking up the big plants (tomatoes are always a challenge) and succession planting seeds as some of the earlier vegetable plants wind down in their production. Additionally, volunteers have been generous with contributing their own garden 'extras' to the OCFP.

We have been working on laying down our wood chip paths all summer long to try and keep down those pesky weeds. Many thanks to Dave and Judy Eckwielen and garden volunteers for their huge effort in getting this done!

This year, Sunday School students had a first-hand lesson on how God provides. Students were able to help harvest some produce for the Food Pantry and plant new seeds in the Community Garden, experiencing the lesson that God gives us many opportunities to share with

those who may be less fortunate.

The garden has been a great place for neighbors to run into each other and for others to forge new friendships. The feedback so far is that the community gardeners have had a great season in the garden both with bountiful harvests and cultivating relationships.

Alternative Gift Fair

Sat. November 16th,

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Lunch available –

Free Gift Cards

We are celebrating 11 years of giving! The Alternative Gift Fair (AGF) will be here before we know it. Invite or bring your friends or family members who don't attend LVPC to this unique shopping experience. If *you* understand alternative giving, explain it to someone who may not be familiar with this special way to double gift dollars! Explain how anyone can come and make charitable donations in honor of family and friends to any of twelve local, national, and international aid

organizations. Free custom gift cards are available for each organization. These are wonderful gifts for teachers, relatives, business associates, or people who “have everything.” Alternative gifts are tax deductible, too.

In addition, we have a fair trade sale with many unique gifts that benefit international artisans through SERRV.

Come to the fair and hear inspiring stories from representatives of each non-profit organization. Celebrate Christmas in a way that honors Jesus! *not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (NIV)*

Alternative Gift Fair **You can help!**

The biggest mission project of our church year is coming up in just a few weeks, on November 16th. This is truly a project in which we can ALL participate. If you can help by putting up a poster at your gym or workplace, putting press releases on newspapers' websites, or making soup, then you can be a part of the team

effort that has raised over \$88,000 in the last 10 years. This is not money for Lower Valley Presbyterian Church, but for needy people in Hunterdon County, our country, and our world.

To help with the wonderful lunch. We are in need of soup, bread and dessert makers as well as people to set-up, clean-up and serve the food. Please contact Lisa Coffaro at coffaro423@comcast.net to offer help.

To help with publicity, decorating before the fair, greeting visitors on Nov. 16th, or cleaning up afterwards, please contact Lyn Magee (lynmagic@gmail.com or 832-2142) or Nancy Knight (nvknight@embarqmail.com or 537-4347). Thank you!

Join us for Fellowship!

Everyone is invited after service every Sunday to enjoy the fellowship of our church family and a bite to eat at the Parish Hall. If you'd like to help with Fellowship in any way, there is a sign up sheet where you can sign up for

setting up, bringing drinks, food or helping with clean up. Anyone, no matter what the age, can help (kids love washing the dishes). So, come and share with us.

Evening Circle

The next meeting of the Women's Evening Circle will be held at **7 p.m., on Wednesday, October 9th, at Judy Eckwielen's home.** We would like to encourage mothers who will be dropping their children off at The Channel that evening to join us, “just across the street,” at **4 Dan-Ly-Way at 7 p.m.** Light refreshments will be served and we will be continuing our Bible study from Presbyterian Women. The lesson, “The Children,” will be based on 1 John 2:1-15, and vs. 29- 3:10, and 1 John 5:1-21. There is no homework, and no commitment to attend every month. We hope to return to meeting in the Getz Library in November. Questions? Call Joni Nodes at 236-7996 or Nancy Knight at 537-4347.

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers	Fellowship Host(s)
October 6	Judy Eckwielen	Judie and Adam Ambielli	Kim Rodgers Terry Hoffman Renee Ollerenshaw Sue Huntington	Donnell Freed Gast
October 13	Sue Huntington	Lisa and Chris Coffaro		Donlon
October 20	STILL NEEDED	Judy Eckwielen Madeleine Argue		Stetler
October 27	Robbie Axelsen	Karen and Warren Newman		Haggerty
November 3	Sue Huntington	Renee and Jeff Ollerenshaw	Sue Huntington Linda Stetler Need 2 more	
November 10	Joni Nodes	Donna and John Leddie		
November 17	Marilyn El-Zahr	Terry Hoffman Ed Getz		
November 24	Judy Eckwielen	Madeleine Argue Need 1 more		

**If you are able to serve in one of the open spots,
please let Claudia know.Thanks!!**

Art Table Schedule for Family Worship

10/13: Nicole Dahl and Christina Wilson
 11/10: Lora Harris
 12/29: Jennifer Wysocki
 1/19: Stephanie Donlon
 2/16: Renee Ollerenshaw
 3/16: Isabel Roppolo and Lisa Coffaro
 4/20: Kim Rodgers, Natalie Gast and Linda Stetler
 5/25: Donna and Erika Leddie

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830
October 2013

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.