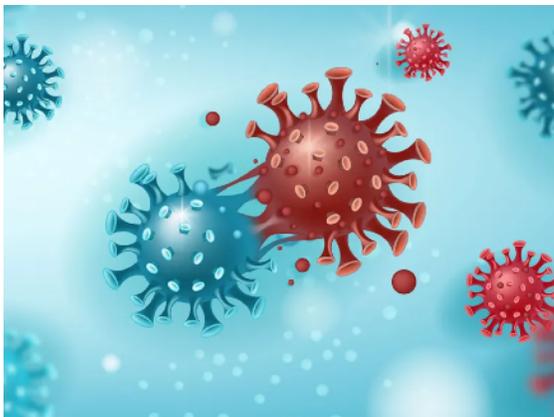


Parish Happenings

September 2021

FROM PASTOR CHAD



Getting Back to Normal?

I'd like to be writing a newsletter about how we are getting back to normal, but I think I may have tried that last year. I admit it is tempting to want things to be how they once were. However, we can no more 'make America great again' — because it implies that some past moment before civil rights, voting rights, women's rights, nuclear non-proliferation, and environmental regulations was somehow great — than we can turn back the clock on recent history.

I'm thinking it might be wiser to simply keep moving forward and accept what has changed and prepare for the inevitable change still to come. The COVID-19 virus and its variants have changed our world and here at home have exacerbated deep

cultural divisions that have been just below the surface of our awareness. The pandemic combined with social unrest like we haven't seen since the 1960s has made it very clear that there is no going back to some past utopia that really only exists in our minds.

Churches and institutions of all kinds tend to struggle with change and instability, yet, we're still here. The people of Lower Valley Presbyterian church continue to worship each Sunday, our bible studies and youth groups stayed connected (even if by Zoom), and our Session continues to try and understand what is next.

None of the turmoil and challenge of the present historical moment has changed our calling to be disciples or our identity as baptized children of God; our purpose, our mission, our mandate from Jesus to "love God and love our neighbor" has not changed in any way. We continue to read scripture and wrestle with how, in this complex world and in this challenging moment in history, we can remain faithful in devotion to God and service of neighbor.

I am certain we can still have a compelling story to tell if we embrace the light of Christ and choose to reflect it into the world. As we've been reading the Gospel of Mark throughout the summer we see the radical inclusive hospitality of Jesus again and again. Jesus is consistent in rejecting traditions and traditionalists who want to put a limit on God's inclusiveness and rejecting the powerful who overlook and ignore the human dignity of their fellow human beings. In the story of Jesus we have the model for who we are and how we are called to be in these times.

No, we are not getting back to normal. And that very well may be a good thing. I'm sure there were plenty of people who just wanted Jesus to leave town and quit healing and teaching and stirring the pot so things could get back to normal. The thing is when we think things are normal it is likely we're not opening our eyes wide enough to see the suffering of the world around us. I'm hopeful we can together live boldly as disciples who step out into the mess and bring the kind of healing love and upending of broken systems that Jesus began.

May the Lord heal us, restore us, and embolden us to embrace our changing world and enter into the lives of others with compassion, welcome, and radical love.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chad".

SUNDAY SCHOOL

We are still looking for teachers. If you think that might be you then give Pastor Chad or Abby Ernst a call.

If you have not yet responded to our previous inquiry about Sunday school we'd love to get your input to the following as soon as possible:

- Do you plan to attend worship in the fall with your children?
- How many children and what ages will attend Sunday school?
- If you do not plan to have your children attend Sunday school why not?
- Would you be interested and willing to join our teaching team?
- Any other input regarding children and worship and Sunday school is welcome...

Reply to lowervalleychurch@gmail.com

Our Sunday school classes will be restarting on September 12. It has been nearly a year and a half since we last had Sunday school during worship so we'll celebrate with ice cream and fun at coffee hour.

At the time of publication we have just two teachers so our K-5 class will meet twice a month and off weeks will be Family Worship Sundays with art tables in the front of the sanctuary for the time during the sermon.

YOUTH GROUP

We can hardly wait to get back into our routine. This Fall *middle school youth group* (grades 6-8) will meet on Wednesday nights from 7-8:30 in the Parish Hall for games, gathering, conversations around scripture and middle school life.

High school youth group (grades 9-12) will meet on Sunday evenings from 7-8:30 at church.

We always have fun whatever we're up to so be sure to join us. We can promise food often and a thought provoking look at the bible as it pertains to high school life and the world. If you want to join in let Pastor Chad know so he can get your number into the text group (we've found this is the best way to get out the details of our gatherings).





Now: Invasive Mugwort: a portion of one edge of our field has been invaded and will need mitigation.



Now: Hay grasses: most of our fields is composed of this.

invasive species from our field along with general clean up and preparation for seeding in the late fall. Everyone is welcome to get involved and join the clean up and preparation.

NATIVE POLLINATOR FRIENDLY MEADOW

“Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad, let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord.” (Psalm 96:11-13)

Beginning this fall we will be partnering with Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner Jared Rosenbaum of [Wild Ridge Plants](#) and Matthew Digiovanni of Troop 92 (Lebanon Township) to transform our empty field (between Sliker Road and the community garden) into a native meadow. Jared will work with us as a consultant and Matthew has taken on the project as part of his Eagle Scout project.

This is an exciting opportunity to both beautify our property, create a peaceful space for prayer and reflection, and support the protection of native meadow plants and crucial pollinators. The new meadow will eventually host hundreds of species of native pollinators with beautiful foliage throughout the spring, summer and fall, it will be a place of refuge for many birds and other small creatures, and encourage carbon sequestration in healthy soil below.

The project will include several work days through the fall (organized by Matthew) to remove



Future: Native Sunflowers, Wild Bergamot and Beibalm

ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Women's Bible study meets the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month (September 8 and 22), from 7:00-8:30 in the Parish Hall. We are using Rachel Held Evans' "Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again". Please join us!

Men's Fellowship: There's plenty of bible study, but that's not all. Join us on Saturdays at 8 a.m. in the library. We share life and wrestle with scripture together. At the present we're spending time in 2 Peter. Contact Chad with any questions.

2022 DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDEPOST ORDERS

We will be placing this year's Membership Recognition Guidepost orders the first week in October. I know that many of you have received the previous year's Guideposts and thought, like me, you might like an opportunity to purchase a Guidepost for 2022. If you are interested, please reach out to Renee Ollerenshaw at jems101992@gmail.com or 908-832-7250 *by Sept 31st*. We need to place our order for this year by the first week in October in order to ensure delivery prior to December. We will work out payment after they are received.

Prices:

Guidepost Pocket Edition 4x6, soft cover	\$10.95
Guidepost Regular Addition, hard cover	\$16.95 (Previous Membership Recognition Purchase)
Guidepost Large Print, soft cover	\$17.95

PRAYER CHAIN

We have revived our prayer chain email list. If you would like to receive the prayer emails, please email Krista Jenkins at KJenkins1970@gmail.com or contact the church office at 832-2933 or lowervalleychurch@gmail.com.

OFFICE HELP

We are looking for someone to help out in the church office from October 22 to mid-December while Claudia is out recovering from surgery. Responsibilities include preparing/printing weekly worship service bulletin and monthly newsletter, ensuring weekly server positions are filled, processing invoices for payment, and general office duties. Please see Pastor Chad if you are interested or know of anyone who may be. Thanks.

COUNTERS NEEDED

The Finance Team is still looking to add to our pool of people willing to count the offerings on Sunday mornings. The addition of on-line giving and our new financial software has made the process easier, faster and more streamlined than it was in the past. If you are able to commit to one Sunday a month to help with the counting, please contact Karen Newman at 908-763-9483 or email kjnewman115@gmail.com.

PARKING LOT FACELIFT



If you were in our area this summer you may have noticed all the road work happening, on 513, in and around Califon. After some negotiations, our church parking lot was used as a staging ground for the chip sealing of 513. In return Dosch-King chip sealed our entire parking lot. This should extend the life of the previous pavement for some years to come.

Some pretty large gravel piles!



Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers
September 5	Warren Newman	Mike Reaves and Bobbie Sliker	OPEN OPEN OPEN OPEN
September 12	Marilyn El-Zahr	Karen and Warren Newman	
September 19	OPEN	Marilyn and Al El-Zahr	
September 26	OPEN	Peggy Macaoay and OPEN	
October 3	Karen Newman	Jackie Zajac and OPEN	OPEN OPEN OPEN OPEN
October 10	OPEN	OPEN and OPEN	
October 17	OPEN	OPEN and OPEN	
October 24	Warren Newman	OPEN and OPEN	
October 31	Peggy Macaoay	Karen and Warren Newman	

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

SERVERS NEEDED

In addition to the above, the following dates are also **OPEN**. We are trying to fill in for the rest of the 2021 as Claudia will out of the office starting October 22 for approximately 6-8 weeks recovering from surgery. Please see sign-up sheet on next page.

November 7 – Liturgist, 2 ushers, 4 Communion servers

November 14 – 2 ushers

November 28 – Liturgist

December 5 – Liturgist

December 12 – 2 ushers

December 19 – Liturgist, 2 ushers

December 24 (4:30 p.m.) – 2 ushers

December 24 (7:30 p.m.) – Liturgist, 2 ushers

December 26 – Liturgist

Ushers and Liturgist Sign-up

We want to fill in the **rest of 2021 OPEN** spots. Help us by filling out this form and dropping it in the offering plate or sending it to the office. Thanks!

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone Number: _____

I'm willing to serve as:

- Liturgist once a month
- Liturgist once every 8 weeks

- Usher once a month
- Usher once every 8 weeks

Other _____

Restrictions (i.e., can't serve in winter months, only available 2nd Sunday of month, etc.)

September 2021
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.