

MRC NEWS

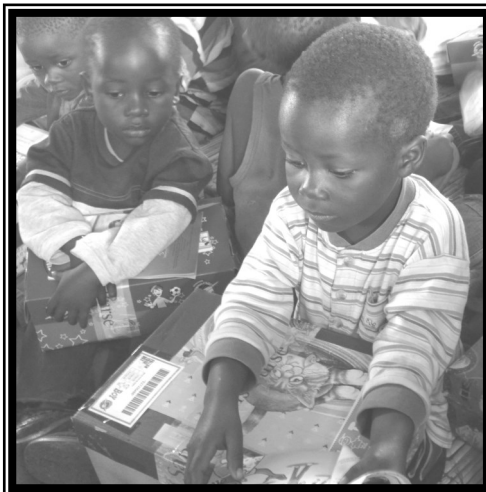
FALL 2013

Reflections on a Zambian Adventure

By Mary Lou Ryan

Since most of our congregation has had an opportunity to see a presentation about my trip to Zambia to distribute Operation Christmas Child shoe box gifts, I have chosen in this newsletter to share some reflections rather than give a recap of the trip. For those of you who live too far away to have attended one of my programs or for those folks whose schedules did not permit their attendance, highlights of my trip may be seen on the church website (middleburghreformed.org).

Going to Zambia was a lesson in contrasts that began even before I left home. Some of the differences related to health. Preparatory reading informed me that the average life expectancy for Zambians is about 50 years. I have passed that by a decade and still enjoy good health. Several immunizations and medication were required for the trip, giving me protection from diseases with which the people of Zambia struggle.



Compared to the material wealth enjoyed in the US, my initial reaction to the Zambian culture was to see poverty. Most of the people in the areas where we distributed gifts are subsistence farmers. It did not take long being among these people to realize how very rich they are in many important ways - hospitality, generosity, friendliness, work ethic, service, and trust.

I went to Zambia to bless children with gifts and the Gospel message, and that was certainly accomplished.

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Sunday School Resumes Sept. 8th

Summer vacation is nearly at an end. But don't be sad!! Because Sunday School will be starting again soon!

On September 8th we will start our season off with Rally Day! Join us

at 9:45 am for a time of sharing and worship. Then we'll do a few fun activities. Then, after the 11:00 am worship service we'll have lunch and take a church family hike up Vroman's Nose.

We have some wonderful topics to cover this year! We are currently in need of another volunteer Sunday School leader. If this is something you would be interested in, please contact us! See you soon!

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SPECIAL DATES TO NOTE:

- **Sept. 1:** *Worship returns to 11:00 am*
- **Sept. 8:** *Sunday School Rally Day, 9:45 am and Fall Hike after worship*
- **Sept. 15:** *Choir begins again, 9:45 am*
- **Sept. 16:** *Book Discussion begins*
- **Sept. 22:** *Visit from RCA missionaries, the Rodriguez Family*
- **Oct. 1:** *NET Dinner*

An Update from the Sanctuary Committee... *(from Joan Youmans)*

We have been blessed in the recovery of our beautiful building and welcome all who have ever worshipped within the walls of the 1786 sanctuary to join us for services on Sunday mornings.

Pews were installed in May, solid wood and very comfortable. The new pulpit is simple and elegant. A matching lectern is being checked into. The communion table, made from some of the original church floor beams, is very special. A baptismal font is being made by local artists. The wall hanging in the alcove is beautiful. The sound system is

state of the art and the lighting is lovely. The new stairs to the balcony are an easy climb. The tall and stately entrance doors welcome everyone who enters.

While pictures can be seen on the church website and Facebook, they can not substitute for the experience of being in the sanctuary surrounded by others joining in worship of our Lord. The quote, "the church is not a building, the church is the people" has appeared in past newsletters over the last two years. The building is ready for the people so please join us for worship.



... and from the Property Committee *(from Leslie Hooper)*

On June 14, 2013, a very heavy rain south of Middleburgh caused a flash flood in the village that ran down upper Main Street through the center of the business district and turned right onto River Street headed in the direction of the Reformed Church. The muddy water totally surrounded our building as witnessed on the local TV news. Fortunately, no water got inside but both parking lots, the front sidewalks and the lawn were covered in mud and

debris.

In the two years since the devastating flood from hurricane Irene, the congregation of the Middleburgh Reformed Church has

*"...Lord willing and the
creek don't rise, the
church is open and ready
for all..."*

worked hard to recover while ever mindful of the potential for future flooding. Much of the reconstruction was aimed at an easier clean up if and when the water came again. The consistory has been dealing with how to obtain flood insurance at a reasonable cost but our location and history with flooding provide challenges in this area. Meanwhile, Lord willing and the creek don't rise, the church is open and ready for all who come.

Who uses our buildings??

We are blessed to be able to share our facilities with the community. The list of those who use our buildings include; boy scouts, girl scouts, AA, American Legion, ARC Friendship Club and the Timothy Murphy Players. This past year we have also hosted the Classis Meeting, our annual Ham Supper, several NET (Neighbors Eating Together) dinners and meals for volunteers who have come to Middleburgh to aid

flood victims. Our Church is a relay center for Operation Christmas Child which is a week long effort bringing OCC Shoeboxes from the surrounding area. Church committee meetings, youth group, children's play group and other church activities keep the calendar full most of the year.

Occasionally there are requests to use our buildings for private social functions. Those wishing

to do this, fill out a request form and provide a deposit which can be refunded at the end of the event. Donations are usually received and very much appreciated to help with the cost of maintaining our facilities. Our food pantry, staffed by volunteers from several churches, is open on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings.

Reflections on a Zambian Adventure (continued)

What I did not realize, was how deeply I would be blessed and inspired by the Zambian people. The Zambian National Leadership Team of OCC greeted us with open arms, welcoming us as beloved guests. Although I was thousands of miles from Middleburgh, I felt very much at home. Our hotel would be considered dated and shabby by western standards, but that was overshadowed by the gracious manner in which we were cared for by the hotel staff. The Zambian people I encountered were warm, welcoming, and generous. They were proud of their country and eager to serve those who visit.

The way in which men and women of Zambia joyfully serve our Lord by reaching out to the people in their communities with the love of Jesus is inspiring. Pastors and teachers are doing mighty work. Dedication and creativity bridge the gap where resources are limited. Humble structures pro-

vide worship spaces where congregants demonstrate the words of Psalm 103:1. **Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me bless his holy name.**

Sunday school teachers, church leaders, and OCC volunteers generously give of their time to share the Gospel. Leaders of many denominations work in unity, sharing their common missions for evangelism and discipleship.

I learned much from the people of Zambia. They demonstrated an attitude of gratitude for blessings of the past, contentment with what they have today, and trust in God's provision for the future. In doing so, they revealed a wealth of spirit that far outweighs what we might think of as economic need. I found myself longing for the same spiritual richness in my own country. I realized that our life of abundance and convenience, instead of freeing us from the cares of the day to celebrate

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me bless his holy name."
Psalm 103:1

the goodness of our God, has trapped us in greed and spiritual sluggishness.

I pray to be forever changed by my experiences in Zambia. May I never forget the boldness with which the Gospel is proclaimed, the beautiful voices singing of God's greatness and love, a people who toil from sunup to sundown to survive and remain generous with their time and talents, a people who give of their first fruits to honor the Lord, and the smiles and laughter of children who held in their hands a tangible representation of our Heavenly Father's love.



Operation Christmas Child

Our 2013 shoe box packing party is only a few weeks away! This year we hope to increase our number of shoe box gifts by 10%, packing a total of 275 at our party. If you have been purchasing gifts, please bring them to church by September 1. I will inventory the gifts we already have and determine what is still needed. You will have an opportunity to choose tags for gifts that need to be purchased beginning September 8. Please keep the following dates in mind:

Oct. 20 - Gifts should be delivered to the church by this date.

Nov. 3 - Lunch and Packing Party (Bring *Follow Your Box Labels*.)

Nov. 17 - Dedication Sunday: Boxes from our packing party and those your family packs at home will be dedicated during our worship service.

Nov. 17 - \$7 donations for shipping and discipleship materials are due.

THANK YOU for supporting OCC!

Mary Lou Ryan

One camper's experience at Camp Fowler



Every year, youth from our church family and our community head north to the shores of Lake Pleasant and the camp fires of Camp Fowler. Fowler is a non-profit Christian children's camp that practices a worldly spirituality. The mission at Fowler is to be a place of Christian hospitality where all are called to live:

- more intentionally in community,
- more graciously in simplicity,
- and more consciously as caregivers to creation.

Assistance for families in our congregation wanting to send their children to camp is available through the Billy Brown Fund. What follows is a letter from Grace Beekman, who spent two weeks at camp in July. Grace writes:

This summer, I went up to Camp Fowler for two amazing weeks during July. The first week was called LEAD (Lead, Serve, Act, and Disciple) week, and the second week was my week as a SWiM (Student Working in Ministry). LEAD week is a new week this

year, and it is designed to encourage leadership and prepare some campers for their week as a SWiM.

Although it rained every day, I thoroughly enjoyed LEAD week and loved all of

the opportunities to challenge myself. One day I did a low ropes course and learned how to design a low ropes program for campers. Another day I hiked two of the high peaks, Cascade Mountain and Porter Mountain. The day that I will remember the most though is the day that I went to Fort Plain with a group of about 15 other LEAD week campers. Fort Plain had been flooded recently and was in need of flood relief. After witnessing the devastation and outpouring of help in Middleburgh following the flooding from Hurricane Irene, the trip to Fort Plain was close to my heart. I was intent on going despite missing out on an overnight trip. The building that I was sent to was Victorious Life Church, where I spent the day removing mud and damaged wooden beams from the church basement. After we had arrived, I heard the pastor say, "I was down in the basement trying to do everything myself and then God sent me helpers." It made my day

to see how thankful and appreciative he was, and I was so glad that I could help him and his church on their path to recovery. LEAD week was an incredible experience for me.

The second week that I made the trip up to Camp Fowler was to be a SWiM, which is basically a junior counselor. I was there for Trail Mix week, which is for 3rd through 5th graders. The campers were wonderful and I loved all of the girls in my cabin. It brought me so much joy to see their happy, smiling faces and see how excited they got. The week was beautiful and sunny, and we got to do plenty of fun activities. I really enjoyed being able to be a role model for the young campers. It made me sing just a little louder, make sure to pay attention during worship time, and show kindness and love for God in everything I did.

Both weeks at camp were amazing experiences for me. Camp Fowler is a beautiful, peaceful place, and it is where I feel the closest to God. I greatly appreciate being given the opportunity to go to Camp Fowler, where I am surrounded by a loving, Christian community that helps me to bring out my faith.



Plain talk about Stewardship *(from Stan Roessler)*

It has been said that it's a good thing that word-abuse isn't a crime, because of how the word stewardship has been abused in many churches. Here is some plain talk about what faithful Christian stewardship is - and what it is not:

Stewardship has been linked intimately with money, and many people see them as synonymous. When stewardship is mentioned, many people merely reach for their wallet or purse in a distinctly defensive manner. In various ways, it has been communicated that money and stewardship are, at the very least, two sides of the same coin – many churches yoke stewardship and finance to form one committee. Ultimately, the emphasis on money prompts us to focus more on the need of the institutional church to receive than on the importance of giving to help the individual grow in relationship to God.

Faithful Christian stewardship begins with God at the center. When stewardship revolves around any other center, it is misconceived. Stewardship is primarily about our relationship with God, not our local church. The church as a community of believers is a means to an end; it is an entry point, a contact point, to the body of Christ.

Stewardship is concerned with how we manage the resources and opportunities for ministry that we have been given by God, and how we respond most appropriately to God's goodness. It is not a stop-gap solution to a fundamental problem, i.e., funding a single year's budget.

We do the very best with what we have, aligning our gifts, talents, energies, and resources with the will of God, and don't waste time trying to figure out how to compensate for the gifts and talents we may lack.

“Faithful Christian stewardship begins with God at the center.”

Stewardship is also a key component of the faith journey – a process of growth and life-changing transformation. We take what we learn and put it into practice. It is a measure of our relationship with God.

Finally, the life of a Christian is defined by the tandem relationship of stewardship and discipleship. As faithful Christian disciples, we learn a great deal about God, life, love, relationships, and faith. Stewardship cannot occur apart from discipleship – it is a disciple's response.

Source: *Revolutionizing Christian Stewardship for the 21st Century.*

Remember the Ecumenical Food Pantry

The Ecumenical Food Pantry is a joint mission of our church, the Middleburgh United Methodist, the Huntersland United Methodist, Our Lady of the Valley, and the Middleburgh Pilgrim Holiness Church. Each church as well as other community groups (Rotary, Boy Scouts, and Postal workers) help staff and donate food items to the food pantry so we are able to stay open.

The food pantry is open every Wednesday from 4 to 6, and Saturday from 9 to 11. The pantry is also open by appointment, by calling 827-7121. During these hours the volunteers have served between 60 and 70 people a month.

The food pantry is always in need of non-perishable food items and volunteer workers. If you wish to donate to the food pantry items may be left by the food pantry door. If you would like to volunteer at the food pantry please call Russ or Stan.

Thank you for your support.

News from the Church Archives *(by Marian Lynes-Bouck)*

Seven Bibles have been presented to the Middleburgh Reformed Church and they are stored on upper shelves in the workroom.

One of these Bibles is priceless to our church. Why? Let's look at some information relating to this Bible. It was published in 1730. It is huge, being 6 inches thick. It is printed in Dutch.

The inscription on the opening page verified as Peter's writing, reads, "The property belonging to the Reformed Low Dutch (sic) Church in Middleburgh Presented by Peter Zielie".

The original owner of the Bible is believed to be David Uzille who came to New Amsterdam in 1660 hence moving to Rensselaerswyck and then on to Schoharie County. A son, Peter Zielie, inherited the Bible. Peter is on the membership list of the 1730 Schoharie Reformed church. The Bible was passed to Peter Zielie, Jr. Several family members were active in the Dutch church here in the valley. Peter Zielie, Jr. was active in the Revolutionary war. He may have been moved to present the family Bible to the Church to replace the ros-

trum Bible lost during the war. It was the first Bible used in the 1786 church in Middleburgh.

Remember at that time every other Sunday the service was in Dutch.

An adopted nephew, Peter Swart at some time came into possession of the Zielie Bible and it was 'lost' for some generations before a George Swart presented it again to our church in 1957. Several members of the present congregation can remember that joyous day we re-gained possession of the Zielie Bible.

A Music Note *(from Russ Ryan)*

As we plan for the upcoming year it is important to reflect on where we were after the flood and how far we have come. Of course during the whole process our small, dedicated group of volunteers, known as the choir, kept singing. Choir members reported for duty at 8:30 on Sundays when we were at the Methodist Church. I am very grateful to each of them for helping to keep our choir tradition going during adverse time.

The church also lost both pianos, and the condition of the organ was unknown right after the flood. Our church has been very fortunate. Dr. and Mrs. Vern Pilon of Glenmont

donated a Yamaha console piano for our fellowship hall. This was of great value to us during the time we used

our hall as our sanctuary. We also have a new/old baby grand piano in the sanctuary, a gift from the Dickerson family. Our church was glad to place "Sunny's" piano in our sanctuary space. Finally the organ! Although no water damage occurred, the organ was un-played for 15 months and there were issues. Sid Chase, the organ builder, did an excellent job and has restored the organ for us.

I wish to thank everyone for supporting our music program, either by your physical presences and participation, by donations to the church, and/or your kind words for our work.

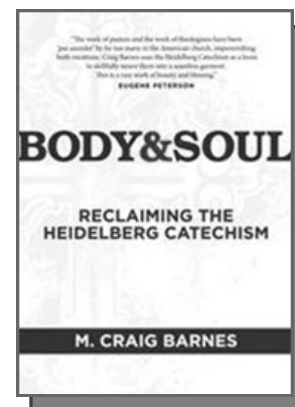
**Choir will start
September 15th at
9:45 am.
New and returning
members are
welcome!**

Book Discussion beginning soon

Join us for our next group discussion on the book ***Body & Soul***, by **Craig Barnes**. Beginning Monday, September 16th we will begin letting Barnes introduce us to the Heidelberg Catechism and show us that it is still speaks today. As one of our confessions in the Reformed Church in America, the HC is far from being a theologically stuffy, hairsplitting litmus test for bludgeoning. It is a deeply personal statement of faith that is inspiring, com-

forting, and challenging. Each week, for seven weeks, we will watch a short introduction by the author and discuss a chapter. For all ages and experience levels! There will likely be dessert, if that helps. If you would like a book there is a sign-up sheet in the foyer.

The book can also be found online at places like at Faith Alive Resources (www.faithaliveresources.org).



The Pastor's Post

Lara and I have been watching past episodes of *Foyle's War*. Each episode is 90 minutes of British accents and smart writing that doesn't need slow-motion brutal injuries to be interesting. Nothing against CSI in all its versions, but this is a real detective show. It is set in England during World War II about detective Peter Foyle who is relentless in the pursuit of justice. Foyle is often asked why he is investigating murder when there is a war going on just over the channel, even by the authorities. Foyle himself struggles with the question as we see him asking for a transfer to a position that will directly help the war effort. The underlying question is clear: why spend all that time chasing down a person for murder with all the death and destruction taking place just a few hundred miles away. Foyle slowly realizes that his seemingly small task has monumental effects.

"...what pleases my Lord and King? It is impossible to be a 'doer' at the Cross of Christ."

It's easy to wonder whether our daily actions make any difference to the greater cause. We are a very pragmatic people, after all. We want to see that our actions matter! The glasses I wear are from a brand that promises to give away a pair to someone in need for each purchased. Isn't that wonderful? Shoes and coffee can be leveraged for social change. We are asked to align ourselves with brands, parties, and styles that reflect our values. This is our meaningful action we are told.

Does this soften our anxiety and satisfy our longing to matter? Maybe for a time. But for the Christian, the heart of it the question is not what can I do to matter. Nor is it: what can we do to make it better? The question begins with God: what has God done, is doing and will do? This comes into focus when we read the Bible. For example, the Bible will make little sense if we read it trying to answer the question: *what can I do?* There are entire books that will be downright disturbing (like Judges or Revelation). But to enter the Biblical story of God creating and redeeming the world and watching the Lord work- is a totally different posture. Once we enter into this new reality that Jesus called the Kingdom of God, then we will ask: *what pleases my Lord and King?* It is impossible to be a 'doer' at the Cross of Christ.

In the face of American pragmatism it is hard see how praying matters or 'going to church' is any better than a walk in the woods. Talking to our neighbor and actually listening to their joys and pain might seem like it does little good. To say, "I'm sorry" might feel weak and not accomplishing anything. To give money away regularly and generously (not just our time or old clothes) we are told is risky at best and foolish at the worst. The 'war' is not being waged just over the channel in France, but right here at home. Thinking pragmatically will never make us alive or grow. A tangible kingdom as something we can buy with a credit card and a bumper sticker is much easier and safer. But instead we are offered an everlasting Kingdom that is invisible and inside of us. It asks personally of us to give up all. Like Foyle we can ask to be transferred, but the sooner we dig into the work that is before us, the sooner life will change within us.

Neighbors Eating Together (NET) Dinners

Last fall the congregations of 5 churches united for a grand experiment. We set out to serve a FREE weekly dinner for the community. The dinners were a tremendous success! Many people enjoyed the food and the opportunity for fellowship. We were able to serve some folks who need help making ends meet. Neighbors who have no church ties were welcomed at each church. Those who prepared and served the meals had fun!

NET dinners will resume in October with one change. This year the dinners will be held on WEDNESDAYS. Our church will put on the meal the first Wednesday of each month. We look forward to your support with food and fellowship. You will have an opportunity to provide, prepare, and serve the food AND share in the meal and fellowship. Mark your calendar for our first dinner, October 1!

The dinner rotation will be:

1st Wednesday - Reformed Church
2nd Wednesday - Middleburgh UMC
3rd Wednesday - Our Lady of the Valley

4th Wednesday - St. Mark's
5th Wednesday - Huntersland UMC

CONTACT INFORMATION

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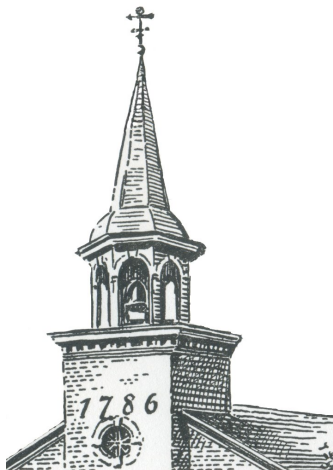
Church
827-5134, office
email: reformed@midtel.net

Mailing Address:
PO Box 112
Middleburgh, NY 12122

Property Caretaker
Doug Kingsbury
827-7791
email: dougk@midtel.net

The Middleburgh Reformed
Church is online!
middleburghreformed.org
And also on
Facebook!

Sunday Worship: 11:00 am
July & August: 9:30 am



Church Business vs. the business of the Church

CONSISTORY MEMBERS

ELDERS

Sarah Bramer
James Spencer, Vice President
Joan Youmans

DEACONS

Brian DeFeo
Leslie Hooper
Karen Miller

There are currently vacancies for both Elder and Deacon. These seats can be filled at any time. If you would like more information on the roles of Elder and/or Deacon, please feel free to contact Pastor Jeff or any consistory member.

Recently, the Finance Committee and the Consistory voted to change the fiscal year for the church to coincide with the calendar year. In order to accomplish this, the budget will need to be prepared months ahead of when it has been in the past. Therefore, an Annual Budget Meeting will be held in December. This meeting will be to adopt a budget for the coming year. The regular Annual Congregational Meeting will be held in the spring. The spring meeting will consist of the committee reports, appointment of Consistory members.

Sometimes, it seems that doing “church business” keeps us bogged down from doing the business of the church. Let us remain actively hopeful and proactively faithful that we will come by the means with which to continue carrying out the business of our Lord, in this beautiful place.

To Benevolence...and beyond! *(by Brian DeFeo)*

Your Benevolence Fund is pleased to have sponsored two young people to attend Camp Fowler this season. We have also assisted two local families; one with some timely clothing purchases and another with food and gas to get to essential medical appointments in Albany.

We wish to expand our local mission and are calling on you to help us do so. Should you know of a person or family in need please let one of the Deacons know of this need. As the lead Deacon for the Fund, feel free to contact me at blkdefeo@midtel.net or by phone at 827-4409.

On a more international note we are very pleased to announce that Albino & Sandy (Wisner) Rodriguez, new missionaries to Peru, will be visiting our Congregation on Sept 21– 22.



Sandy and Albino with their daughter, Doriana

Their mission, La Casa del Maestro, is located in Cusco, Peru. To return to work in Peru, they must have 100% of their budget pledged or committed. They are currently 51% of the way there. It is hoped that in addition to our Congregational sponsorship, individuals might be moved to make additional donations to this worthy new mission. If you would like to follow Sandy and Albino's

progress and their journey, you can read their blog at <http://HIStory-rodriguez.blogspot.com/> What could be more exciting than their visit? Perhaps a second visit to the Rodriguez family by the stork in December, or the fact that Albino just passed his U.S. Citizenship test!! Stay tuned in for the blessings that you can be a part of for this growing missionary family.