

# MRC News

JANUARY 2017

We begin another year with hearts full of gratitude for the Lord's faithfulness in the past year. Before my sabbatical last May I was challenged by this verse: The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Phil 4). Many believe Paul is naïve and inexperienced in the way of worry. Worry, people say, is relieved through distraction, or by getting a new and larger perspective. And these can be good and helpful things. But there is more available. The remedy, Paul says, is to give thanks while asking God for what we need. Both together. I was worried heading into the summer for my sabbatical. I wondered if I prepared enough, if I talked enough about it, and what I was forgetting. I had to work at it, but I eventually prayed. I prayed that people would be cared for. I prayed for our guest pastor Lynn. I prayed that people would step into new roles of service and leadership with courage. And now, unless I missed something, I think we can all say together that the Lord blessed the time. He gave each of us what we needed. People learned more and were challenged to share their gifts. The time was really good and the benefits are still being felt today. You can read more about what it did for me in a follow-up letter posted in September on our website, under the *News & Updates* tab.

We are also looking ahead with expectation. We have been engaged with the Ridder Church Renewal process. It is simply a process and series of values and skills to facilitate corporate and personal transformation. Through this process and the continued faithfulness of each of you we sense that God is affirming the church's life and ministry together. This work has led us to work on developing a mission and vision statement. I am the first to admit I was reluctant to do this. But if we did our work well, we will be able to see the church and ourselves in the statement. That is- it should feel like it fits even as it challenges us. So we are excited to share what we have come up with:

As the body of Christ, the mission of the Middleburgh Reformed Church is to demonstrate the transformative message of Jesus Christ. Our vision is that we will grow as disciples through prayer, worship, education and service.

We look forward to learning what this means and looks like. I think it affirms many of the things we do well and enjoy doing, while also opening up possibilities for things that we want to try again or new ways of being church together. Our journey will be like swinging: we need to lean back to move forward. We lean back on what God has given us and who we are; and then kick forward. And it becomes joy. We have nothing to loose because we already have it in Christ.

In Christ, Pastor Jeff

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Youth Education	2
Fellowship	2
Remembrance Tree	3
Holiday Activities	3
Property	4
OCC	5
Benevolence Fund	6
Food Pantry	6
Ham Supper	7
Finance	7

**Youth Education** *by Sarah Bramer*

In 2016, Youth Education evolved a little to meet the needs of our church family. Youth Education at Middleburgh Reformed Church typically follows a school year calendar, so January 2016 found us smack in the middle of our “school year”. Sunday School was for grades K-6 at that point. Along with curriculum lessons, we scheduled “Service Sundays” to work on projects to spread God’s love to others. In February, we made 12 “no-sew” blankets for Project Linus (blankets are distributed to children in hospitals, shelters and fosters homes to provide comfort). In May, we assembled 35 “S’mores Kits” and handed them out to families at Middleburgh’s First Friday/5K Event in June. Also in June, the children held a free car wash for our community. Unfortunately we had rainy weather, but we did wash a few cars. This is something that we will try again later in 2017. We continued the practice of having the children decide how to use their weekly offering money to help others. In 2016, they supported the Juvenile Diabetes Research Founda-

tion by sponsoring Anna's Army, at the Annual JDRF Walk in Albany. They also chose to send donations to Marathon for a Better Life and the NY Wildlife Rescue Center. Youth Group, at the time for 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade was quiet at the beginning of the year. They tried some evening meetings in January, but participation fizzled out. In April and May, Pastor Jeff met with 7-12<sup>th</sup> graders on Sunday mornings for 6 weeks as a discussion group. This seemed more successful and we decided to continue that format for Fall 2016.

After a summer off, Youth Education began again in September. Sunday mornings now offer classes for Youth in grades K-12. K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students are using a curriculum from Living Resources. We begin the morning with praise and worship singing and take our offering. Lessons are then taught in small groups. 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade students meet with Pastor Jeff using the Alpha for Teens material. It is our hope that this new structure will allow us to stay connected with our students after 6<sup>th</sup> grade and be able to walk with them as

they mature in their faith through high school.

Currently there are 22 students who regularly attend Youth Education classes, representing 12 families. There are 4 other children from 2 families that attend from time to time. Having this many students and small groups means we are using our fellowship hall to the max! Classes are taught in the both small meeting rooms and the nursery, with 2 groups meeting in the fellowship hall. Sometimes the noise can be quite a challenge, but we are blessed to get to spend time with these wonderful young people.

Please pray for our students and families, that they will remain faithful to God and connected to us. Please pray for our youth leaders, for their energy, patience, and faithful hearts. Please pray for our challenges, for solutions to space and sound issues. Thank you!

**Fellowship Committee** *by Mary Lou Ryan*

Following a fulfilling year in 2016, the fellowship committee looks forward to serving you in 2017. Mark your calendar for NET dinners on Feb. 1 and April 5. The appreciation dinner for first responders held last winter was such a hit, we are planning to recognize Middleburgh Village and Town officials and employees with a dinner this coming March. The committee looks forward to your support of these and other activities throughout the New Year as we seek to demonstrate God’s love in our community.



Save the Date: Enjoy lunch with your church family at our Valentines Luncheon on Feb. 12 following the worship service.

## Remembrance Tree

Each year during Advent, we place lights on the bushes in front of our church in memory or honor of loved ones. Names of those remembered are placed on “Remembrance Tree Quilt” displayed in the sanctuary the following year. Remembrance donations may be given to a mission or charity of your choice or to the Memorial Fund of the Middleburgh Reformed Church. There is still time to participate. If you would like to remember someone this year, please contact Leslie Hooper at 2939 State Route 30, Fultonham, NY 12071 or (518) 827 4754.

## 2016 Advent Decorating Party and Children’s Christmas Program



## Property Committee *by Leslie Hooper*

Since the last newsletter, the Property Committee has continued to meet once a month to discuss and decide on various property issues. Thank you to the committee: Arleen, Aaron, Richard, Leslie and Property Caretaker Doug Kingsbury.

Last spring, one of the big trees on the front lawn died and needed to come down. Thank you to church members who helped with the clean up. There are still many trees as evidenced by the huge pile of leaves which must be removed each fall with help from the boy scouts. A major project in July was the repair and painting of the bell tower on our 230 year old church. Dimensions North was contracted to repair the extensive insect and weather damage and to do the painting. Doug Kingsbury completed the work on the sanctuary windows—a project that took many hours over each of three summers.

In 2016, the MRC fellowship hall was used 234 days by several groups for a variety of activities. There were many days when there were multiple users. The building use policy requires each user of the facilities to clean up after their activity so it will be ready for the next group. While this plan looks good on paper, the end result is not

always satisfactory which has led to increased cleaning for the property caretaker. Church workdays in the spring and fall have had low turnout leaving additional tasks to be completed by the property caretaker.

For the last two years, volunteers have signed up to clean the church sanctuary. The Property Committee is proposing a plan which involves volunteers cleaning some additional areas of the building such as the foyer, nursery, classrooms and kitchen. These volunteers would be able to choose the time that best fits their busy schedules so they can clean the area they have chosen. The property caretaker would be responsible for cleaning all tile floors, foyer floors, bath-

rooms, windows, screens and siding. Yard work can also be done by volunteers on days they choose rather than on an “official” church work day.

The property caretaker duties and responsibilities include much more than cleaning. Building maintenance, minor repairs, sidewalks, safety, comfort and meeting with those who use the buildings are also part of the job description. The volunteer cleaning proposal could help with cleaning costs, but if we are not able to do this, then we need to spend additional money to have it done or accept that everything may not get done.

We welcome anyone who would like to be part of the Property Committee.



Sunset. February 2016

## Operation Christmas Child *by Mary Lou Ryan*

### Shoebox Gifts

On Dec. 18, the youngest members of our church family retold the Christmas story for us. The story is one most of us grew up hearing every December. Perhaps, we even played one of the roles in a pageant. Later in the service on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Pastor Jeff reminded us that Jesus is the answer to all of the world's needs. Again, this was a message we have been privileged to hear many times. Imagine what can happen when a family hears this Good News for the first time!

Our Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes are a tool that will be used by pastors in faraway places to introduce children and their parents to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The shoeboxes we packed in 2016 have been shipped to Mali, Ghana, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Please pray that the families who are the recipients of our

outreach will be open to receiving the Greatest Gift – Jesus!

### Relay Center

In 2016, MRC served as an OCC drop-off site for the eighth year. Volunteers from Second Reformed of Howes Cave, Schoharie Reformed, Our Lady of the Valley, and our own church family greeted donors, received gifts, and “cartonized” shoeboxes. 1,503 shoeboxes were delivered by 28 churches, some individuals, and community organizations. Members of Boy Scout Troop 2 hefted the shoebox-filled shipping cartons onto a truck (AKA sleigh) provided by Barber’s Farm. “Santa Cindy” and Mary Lou delivered them to the collection center on Nov. 20. Brian De-Feo and Stan Roesler made a “clean-up run” to the collection center with the shoeboxes that came in on Nov. 21, the last day of the collection.



### Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who supports OCC in a variety of ways: service, purchasing gifts, paying for shipping, and covering the project in prayer. May you feel blessed by your participation in this outreach that builds and unites the Body of Christ.



## Benevolence Fund *by Mary Lou Ryan*

The MRC Board of Deacons administers the church's benevolence fund. Funds are distributed to people, programs, and institutions to promote God's work through the church in the community and the world. A summary of 2016 disbursements follows:

La Casa del Maestro (Peru)	\$1,575.00
Rodriguez Vehicle Fund	218.00
World Vision	188.00
Operation Christmas Child	350.00
Project Night-Night	91.00
Adopted Christmas Family	274.00
Aid to Local Families	735.00
First Baptist Church of Deweyville, TX (flood relief)	285.76
Sharon Reformed Church (belltower lightning strike)	200.00
Total:	\$3,916.76

All members of the MRC family are encouraged to bring needs of our neighbors and ideas for outreach to the attention of a deacon.

## Food Pantry Report *by Russ Ryan*

This report could be the standard year-end report, the number of clients who used the food pantry, and the year-end balance in the check book. Instead, I hope this narrative will help you understand the work of the food pantry.

First, thank you to all the volunteers and substitutes who sit in the food pantry on Wednesdays or Saturdays waiting for clients to arrive. Sometimes it is busy, other times very quiet. You volunteers are great to work with. Someone always steps up to help cover the hours that the food pantry is open. One volunteer, who was going away for Christmas, was afraid she might get sick. She asked me to arrange for people she could call to cover for her, just in case.

Second, thank you to all the

churches, civic organizations, and individuals who donate food and/or money. Between monetary donations and grants we certainly have the resources to keep serving clients. It is very easy for me to order bulk quantities from the Regional Food Bank and get cases of food at one time. However, I think about the donor who puts together a bag containing a box of pasta, a jar of tomato sauce, a can of fruit, a can of vegetables, and a box of cereal. That donor is trying to help one person at a time.

Third, it may seem strange to say thank you to our clients, but as the clients come in for food they also open up and talk. We are not therapists but we listen and many times it helps us understand who uses the food pantry. Clients tell us about high energy bills,

medical problems and bills, temporary loss of jobs, marital problems, spousal losses that reduce benefits, and just not enough income to cover basic needs. When we hear these stories we realize how lucky we are and that there is real need in our community.

The food pantry is open Wednesday 4 to 6, and Saturday 9 to 11, also by appointment. We are staffed by volunteers from the Huntersland Methodist Church, the Middleburgh Methodist Church, Our Lady of the Valley, Middleburgh Pilgrim Holiness Church, and the Middleburgh Reformed Church. We receive donations from all of these churches as well as Rotary, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Postal food drive, and individuals. We will continue to operate as long as there is a need.

## 2016 Ham Supper Report *by Susan Pendergast*

I have the privilege to report that the **36<sup>th</sup> Annual Ham Supper**, held on Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>, was a great success for our church family. We served 500 dinner guests and fed approximately 50 workers. We were pleased to hear comments from our dinner guests about the excellent quality and quantity of our food, and the friendly family atmosphere that surrounded them as they ate. Our profit of just over \$ 3,500.00 will be put to good use in our church's general fund. All this was possible because we worked along side friends and neighbors, who had the same goal, to support the work that we do here at Middleburgh Reformed Church. It was all of us working together that made

our Ham Supper a success. As chairperson, I would like to extend a Thank You to all the committee chairs who helped me in getting ready for our event. It takes many people, several weeks in advance to make it all happen. So, to all those who helped put together lists, went shopping, placed orders or drove to pick up our hams, a heartfelt Thank You. And to the many people who come early to set up, spend hours working and serving, or stay late to clean up, another big Thank You. My report would not be complete without thanking all those who donated food items or extra time to make our supper a success. Thank you to Barber's Farm for donating all the squash and potatoes.

Thank you to Meg and Betsy for donating the ingredients and making the delicious raisin sauce. Thank you to the pie bakers for all those delicious pies. Thank you the "Squash crew" who spend all morning cooking that very popular side dish. Finally, a warm Thank You, to our community of church friends that come to support us year after year. I will leave you with the same invitation that I have extended in the past. We invite you to join us and be a part of our worship and fellowship each Sunday. Let the warm feelings and good friendships that surround us at Ham Supper time continue to keep us together all year round. Good Friends should gather and share the Good News. God Bless you all.

*Photos from the Ham Supper on page 8*

## 2016 Year End Financial Report *by Finance Committee*

Here is a summary of our 2016 financial picture.

Deposits from Plate Offerings: \$ 95,817.65

Deposits from other sources\*: \$ 56,844.22

**Total Deposits for 2016: \$ 152,661.87**

**Total Expenses in 2016: \$ 148,978.13**

\* Other sources include in part: donations received from building use, Ham Supper, donations from individuals, money transferred from other funds for specific purposes (i.e. Billy Brown Camp Scholarships, repair of the steeple, Jeff's sabbatical expenses)

We thank God that our financial needs were met in 2016. We are fortunate to have had funds on hand for the steeple project and for the costs associated with Jeff's sabbatical. We were blessed by people with donations in memory of loved ones. We pray that God will make us good stewards of those gifts.

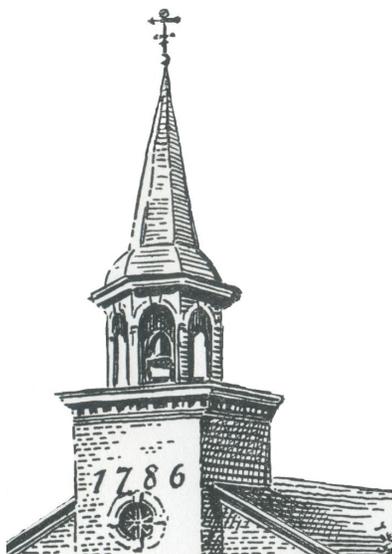
**CONTACT**  
**INFORMATION**

*Pastor Jeff Kelley*  
827-8785, home  
email: [jeffa.kelley@gmail.com](mailto:jeffa.kelley@gmail.com)

*Church*  
827-5134, office  
email: [reformed@midtel.net](mailto:reformed@midtel.net)  
Mailing Address:  
PO Box 112  
Middleburgh, NY 12122

*Property Caretaker*  
Doug Kingsbury  
827-7791  
email: [dougk@midtel.net](mailto:dougk@midtel.net)

*Consistory Members*  
Kim Smith, Vice President  
Susan Pendergast, Elder  
Joan Youmans, Elder  
*vacant seat*, Elder  
Mary Lou Ryan, Deacon  
*vacant seat*, Deacon  
*vacant seat*, Deacon



**How do you get your news?**

Here are some options for you when getting your church newsletter.

Newsletters and Monthly Events sheets are available on our website:

[www.middleburghreformed.org](http://www.middleburghreformed.org)

Please contact us via email: [reformed@midtel.net](mailto:reformed@midtel.net) if you would prefer to receive our newsletter electronically and stop receiving the paper version. Thank you for helping us save paper and postage.

P.S. You can also find us on Facebook!