

MRC News

JANUARY 2016

Happy New Year! I hope this newsletter finds you well with the hope and anticipation of another year. There are two long-term projects I want to offer an update on: the Ridder Church Renewal process and the pastoral sabbatical.

The Ridder team is gearing up for the second module beginning with a retreat in May. Last November the team hosted a time of conversation and questions around the question of mission: what we do and where are the needs are in our community. We were encouraged by this time because genuine courage and insights were shared. We look forward to continuing the conversation as we continue to ask: *what is our current reality around mission*. These aren't easy conversations and they create a gap. They tug at each of our own ideas about what we value and hold true. We are also tempted to jump to: *what do we do about it?* And then for some, we won't be moving fast enough and others, too fast. But we need to resist jumping ahead and instead ask God: *what are you calling us to do?* There may be a glaring and pressing need that we want to address. But unless God is leading we'll be stopped. We know that we do not occupy the corner of River and Middlefort for the immediate and sole benefit of ourselves. We don't live in the place we do just because we like the view or some fate. We don't have our responsibilities and roles 'just because' we got lucky. God has an agenda and we are a part of it. God invites us to serve others- one another and 'the other'. The other is our neighbor that we have to cross some boundary to get to. Our church will always be a church in and for the community- open and engaging with the folks that are connected through this place. One way that we are already doing this is through use of our building. We are trying for it to be a hospitable place for people to gather. By doing so it is not for our immediate benefit, but we are blessing and promoting The Good of community and families- so that they may know the Giver of the Good. Jesus never attracted people to follow, he invited. Jesus never healed with conditions. Once people experienced the life of Christ, then the road unfolded. We hope to work in the same way. But how do we get there? I am wondering too and I am also looking forward to walking this process out with you.

Related to this are that plans are going ahead for my sabbatical. It will start late May and be 13 weeks long. I am exploring ways to rest and engage even on a shoestring budget. I don't mind this, as it will more likely keep me honest. My plan is that my time will begin and end with a personal retreat to a place like a monastery. I also hope to do some reading and learning on my own around the question of spirituality and leadership. Though, I am still exploring (and dreaming) that I could engage with learning elsewhere as well, but I am still waiting for details to decide. During that time, the Sabbatical committee is hoping that it will be a time of rest and engagement for the congregation as well. We don't want to just survive (we can do that), but we are talking about ways to explore how God has called and gifted each of us. Discovering our personal giftings will lay some groundwork for how we are gifted and called together. Every time has its' season and I pray that you are experiencing a deepening of trust in Jesus and a desire for God.

- Pastor Jeff

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Pastoral Sabbatical Planned for Summer 2016 *by Kim Smith*

Our minister, Jeff Kelley, has faithfully served the Middleburgh Reformed Church for nearly 7 years. The Reformed Church in America recommends that churches allow pastors an opportunity to take a sabbatical after 5 and before 10 years of serving a church. Jeff is scheduled to take his first Sabbatical during the summer of 2016. Here we seek to address some of the questions about the Sabbatical that may be on the minds of our church family.

What is a sabbatical? The word comes from the Hebrew, *sabat*-meaning to stop, or cease, like in sabbath. A sabbatical is a time away taken about every seven years. It mirrors the Old Testament practice of letting a field lay fallow and eat whatever came up for a year after 6 years of harvest. In this case, a sabbatical is an extended time of ceasing from the routine work to listen to God in different ways.

Why do pastors take a sabbatical? The church over the centuries has discovered the wisdom of a sabbatical. The practice moved to the academic world, but recently it's returning to the church because of the benefits. A pastor needs to attend to their health on an ongoing basis- an extended time away can be beneficial for both pastors and churches. A pastor can regain clarity of call, renew ones person, and explore interests to then reenter refreshed for another period serving.

When and how long will Pastor Jeff's sabbatical be? From May 29, 2016 - August 21, 2016. 13 weeks in all.

Who will preach and lead worship? The Sabbatical Planning Committee and Consistory think it would be best to have consistency in worship so will be searching for a guest pastor. They will also be asked offer some pastoral care along with some other responsibilities that

have not been worked out yet.

Who will I call if I need help or pastoral care? You may call the guest pastor or, of course, an Elder or Deacon.

What will Pastor Jeff do during his sabbatical? Pastor Jeff is still planning. But initial thoughts include retreats to monasteries, engaging with a spiritual director, and exploring a trip to Scotland for a summer program, and a family trip to Michigan to visit family.

And how much will this cost? We anticipate this will be an additional \$2600-\$5000 to our spending for the year to cover the cost of a guest minister. Pastor Jeff will still receive support for those weeks he is gone.

Who can I contact about other questions or concerns? The Sabbatical Planning Committee: Kim Smith, Brian DeFeo, Joan Youmans or Arlene Kingsbury.

Fellowship Committee *by Mary Lou Ryan*

Members of the fellowship committee are committed to serving the congregation through hospitality and fellowship. They coordinate NET dinners, church family activities, and funeral luncheons/receptions. The committee wishes to thank everyone in our church family who generously supports our efforts with their time, delicious food, and financial contributions.

Children from our church family decorate the Sanctuary Christmas tree during our Family Advent decorating party.



2015 Remembrance Tree *by Leslie Hooper*

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 a "Remembrance Tree" displayed in the sanctuary the following year. Donations made to "buy a light" are earmarked for various church uses. In 2015, we asked the church family to make donations to a mission or charity of their choice OR to the Memorial Fund of the Middleburgh Reformed Church. In doing this we this we hoped to encourage more giving throughout the community and to learn what types

of missions and charities our church family is passionate about.

In addition to the Memorial Fund here at church, donations were made to the following groups:

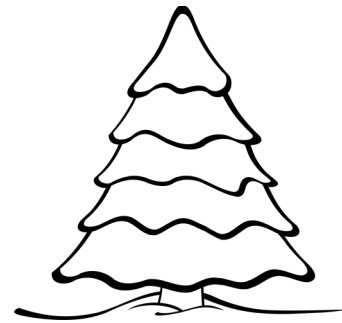
- the Abundant Life Church of the Nazarene (see Deacon's report)
- Middleburgh Century Club
- Middleburgh Fire Department
- MEVAC
- Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

-Muscular Dystrophy Association

-St. Jude's Children's Hospital

-St. Peter's ALS Center

Thank you for your participation in this project!



Deacon's Report on 2015 activities *by Arlene Kingsbury*

The Deacons have continued to serve people within our church family, our local community, and worldwide. This takes on many forms through myriad services including:

- * Moving Mission (transportation for those in need)
- * WE events (cross-generational gatherings)
- * Encouraging support of the local food pantry
- * Making contacts with church

family members experiencing challenges

- * Project Night Night (in conjunction with the school)
- * Support local families in need

We reached out to the Abundant Life Church of the Nazarene in Columbia, SC that was flooded earlier this fall.

Recently, Deacons have begun assisting ushers in recording and

depositing weekly offerings and donations.

We are very excited about the upcoming dinner we are hosting for our MEVAC and Middleburgh firefighters and their families to show our appreciation.

We encourage you to bring spiritual and service needs to our attention.

A Note from the Archives:

Two of the greatest sources of information about the activities of our Middleburgh Reformed Church during the first years of the 21st Century are the monthly calendars and the semi-annual newsletters. Many thanks to those people who assemble, print and distribute these sources of information. They are carefully filed for future reference.



A window in the Sanctuary decorated for Advent and Christmas. The children made the angels and stars during our "decorating party" after Thanksgiving.

Property Committee *by Leslie Hooper*

Last January, a National Grid representative called and offered free LED light bulbs to replace some of our currant bulbs which will hopefully save some energy costs. In March, sound absorbing panels were installed in the fellowship hall to help reduce the noise. In October, SUNY Cobleskill Prof. Tim Marten brought a dozen volunteer students to work on some of our landscape issues. They planted some grasses by our church sign and simplified our parking lot garden which should make it easier for us to maintain. We had hoped to have a contractor paint our bell tower and steeple, however, that project was delayed until this coming summer. This winter, we will be contracting for snowplowing which will be a new line item in our budget. We thank Jim Snyder who has voluntarily plowed our property for many years.

Our property caretaker, Doug Kingsbury, has again been very busy taking care of our property. A snow blower was purchased for use on the sidewalks while the extreme cold caused some

issues with the entryways. During the warmer months, Doug resumed work on the sanctuary windows which has been a very labor intensive project involving the use of a set of scaffolds. Doug has been responsible for the cleaning and maintenance in our fellowship hall and foyer while volunteers have stepped up to clean the sanctuary. Spring and fall workdays were held to work on larger projects. Many hands

We've done as much as possible to prepare for the possibility of flooding. Several folks were called and asked if they would be on a contact list if we need to move some things in the event of predicted high water. We are grateful for their willingness to help if necessary. The consistory has established a fund for future flood recovery since flood insurance is not feasible in today's insurance climate. Proceeds from this year's Trash and



We had no takers. There's always next year!

Treasure Sale were directed into this fund.

Finally, we continue to be blessed by our beautiful sanctuary and fellowship hall. We are grateful to be able to share it and hopeful that building use donations will help to cover some of our building costs. We try to be as fair as possible when granting requests from various community groups as well as hosting our own church activities. Thank you for your support in sharing our blessings.

Sanctuary Committee *by Joan Youmans*

Last year at the Congregational meeting, I reported that this committee was disbanded, but we had yet to receive the baptismal font. When we had all the pieces in place we had a portion of a regular Sunday service to dedicate the piano (given by the Dickerson family), communion table (made with original beams from the basement), pulpit, lectern and the font (a collaboration between two local artisans, Howard Bartholomew, who made the stand, and David Smyth, who made the bowl and pitcher). With so many churches still struggling, we are truly blessed to have our Sanctuary back. I report this with deep appreciation for all those who gave their time and effort to that committee—thank you.



Operation Christmas Child *by Mary Lou Ryan*

The NY Greater Capital District area team of Operation Christmas Child wishes to thank MRC for hosting a relay center for the project. The 2015 shoebox collection week marked the seventh year that the church has served in this capacity. OCC relies on the support and generosity of local churches all over the country to offer the use of their facilities as drop-off sites. THANK YOU for providing a safe, convenient, and hospitable place for shoebox donors to take their gifts!



We celebrate increased participation in OCC in the Northeast during 2015. Our region which includes all the states from New York to Maine surpassed its goal of 400,000 shoeboxes! Our relay center logged in 1,578 shoeboxes. Those packed by the Middleburgh Reformed Church totaled 339. Praise God for this bountiful harvest!

Please pray for those who are distributing shoeboxes to children who have been impacted by war, disease, poverty, and natural disasters. Pray for their safety, health, and stamina as they share the Gospel, especially when their mission takes them into dark places. Pray for

the children who are receiving the gifts, that their physical needs will be met and their spirits will be eager to accept the Greatest Gift ever given – Jesus!

As we look to the 2016 shoebox collection season, there will be many ways for you to participate. Start by saving your Christmas cards that have religious pictures or nature scenes. Remember to look for gifts at bargain prices all year long. Keep the joy and hope of Christmas in your heart!



***Middleburgh Reformed
Church packed 339
shoeboxes in 2015!
Our relay center logged
1,578 boxes!***

Benevolence Fund *by Mary Lou Ryan*

Each month \$333.33 from the MRC general fund is transferred to the Benevolence Fund account (\$3,999.96 for the year). The Board of Deacons oversees the use of the account. They develop a spending plan for the year to guide their stewardship of the funds. The following is a summary of spending in 2015:

La Casa del Maestro	\$1,575.00
World Vision	406.00
Camp Tuition for a Non-member of MRC	400.00
Operation Christmas Child	350.00
Christmas Projects	300.00
Support for Local Families	950.00
Emergencies	350.00

Total Spent in 2015: \$4,331.00*

*A balance carried over from 2014 allowed spending to exceed 2015 contributions.

Food Pantry Report *by Russ Ryan*

The Middleburgh Ecumenical Food Pantry is housed at the Reformed Church. Members from Our Lady of the Valley, Hunter-land Methodist, Middleburgh United Methodist, Middleburgh Pilgrim Holiness, and the Middleburgh Reformed Church support the food pantry by providing volunteers to staff the operation, donate food and donations of money to keep the shelves stocked.

The Food Pantry has chosen the Middleburgh Central School District as it's geographic area. This means the food pantry will provide non-perishable food items to clients residing in the MCS district. However, we do

serve anyone in need. Clients from outside our geographic area are given food and a list of food pantries in their area.

The volunteers follow guidelines for food distribution provide by the Regional Food Bank. These guidelines provide the clients ingredients to make balanced meals for 3 to 4 days. This year from January to November we have serves 823.

The Food Pantry is stocked by donations and grants. The food pantry relies on donations, both monetary and non-perishable food items from members of the community. The food pantry also has 2 grants. The first grant is kept on account at the Re-

gional Food Bank and is used for our orders from them. The second grant is a utilities grant. This grant pays the church 3.2% of the churches electric and gas bills.

Thank you to all the volunteers from all the churches who staff the open hours. A big thank you to Michele Becker who organizes and sends us the church utility bills. Another special thanks to Doug Kingsbury who drives to Cobleskill on food pick-up days. Last time we picked up 85 cases of food.

The food pantry can use your help. Sign up for a permanent time to work, or sign up to be a sub.

Worship Committee *by Joan Youmans*

Worship committee meets 4 to 5 times a year. Worship and special services are planned for Maundy Thursday, Palm Sunday, Easter, Christmas and Advent. We have a sign up sheet in the foyer for people to sign up to read the liturgy. (also on that sheet, you can sign up to provide coffee hour after church). We have a budget which covers: guest speakers, special music, Christmas and Advent decorations and candles, palm branches, etc. We help with the bulletin for Sunday services and take care of changing the paraments. Our next meeting is Feb 24th. No one person can run this committee or any other committee alone. I would like to thank everyone on this committee for their help this past year.

2015 Ham Supper Report *by Susan Pendergast*

I am very pleased to report that the **35th Annual Ham Supper**, held on Nov. 14th, was another great success for our church family. We successfully served 550 dinner guests and fed approximately 50 workers. We were, once again, successful in offering food of excellent quality and quantity, and serving it with a smile. We succeeded in making a profit of \$4,100.00, which will be put to good use in our church's general fund. All this was possible, because we were successful in working together, as a church family. The people who served, scooped, cooked, washed, sliced and greeted our guests, willingly fulfilled their tasks. They worked along side friends and neighbors, who all have the same goal, to support

the work that we do here at the Middleburg Reformed Church.

As chairperson of the Ham Supper, I would like to extend a big Thank You to all the committee chairs who helped to get the workers organized and ready for our event. It takes many people to make it all happen. So, to all those who helped put together lists, went shopping, placed orders or drove the 'ham pick-up truck', a heartfelt Thank You. To the many people who came early to set up, spent 3 hours working and serving, or stayed late to clean up, another huge Thank You.

I cannot end my report 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, once again. Thank you to the potato bakers for providing the sour cream. Thank you to the pie bakers for all those tasty pies. Thank you to Leslie and the "Squash crew" for taking on the huge task of 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, as well as more OCC photos on page 8

Youth Education *by Sarah Bramer*

Sunday School resumed it's normal activities in September. This year we have up to 18 active students who are keeping their leaders (Joel and Sarah Bramer and Lara Kelley) on their toes. Last summer the students held a very successful Lemonade Stand project for Blood:water mission. This lead us to think of more ways the kids could actively serve others. In December, they made 125 Christmas cards for seniors who have meals delivered to their homes. In February they will be making blankets to donate to Project Linus. In the spring, they are looking forward to holding a FREE CAR WASH for the community. They are learning about wisdom, service, the 10 Commandments, more about heroes in the bible and what it means to live with a heart for others. They are a great bunch. For our older students (7-12 grade), Youth Group resumes this January. They will meet Sunday evenings and enjoy time of discussion, games, and FOOD! All youth are welcome at Sunday School (PreK-6) and Youth Group.



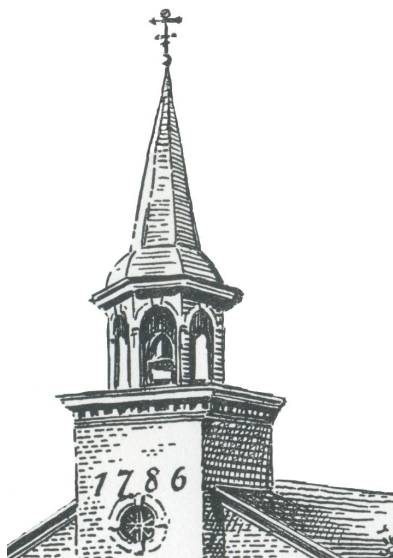
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Joan Youmans, Elder
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Arlene Kingsbury, Deacon
Mary Lou Ryan, Deacon
vacant seat, Deacon
vacant seat, Deacon



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

Please contact us via email: 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!