

# MRC NEWS

Middleburgh Reformed Church

PO Box 112

Middleburgh, NY 12122

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



Spring 2013

## Pastor Kelley Leads

... "These buildings are timber and stone, and now some steel, not merely a sum of its parts, nor merely utilitarian to keep the rain off. It reflects and shapes our values and meaning. It tells the story of God's faithfulness towards people in this place. **The buildings also invite us to come closer to God.**

It's like the woman at the well, from whom Jesus asked for a drink of water.

Jesus first asks for a drink- but then turns it around. Jesus says, *"If you knew who was asking you for a drink, you would have been asking him for a drink and he would give you living water."*

Material things do that. They point to our deeper needs, and beg us to listen. We come into this Sanctuary presuming to call on God. But is it not God who has called us? Does not our thirst for water or bread echo our longing to be fed in our souls?

This now is the challenge we face. We have a nice space to gather. We will have more comfortable seating in May. We can get everything right- from the paint color and furniture to the liturgy and hymns. But our activity and words beg for our need, for God's activity and Word to us.

John of the Cross, a 16<sup>th</sup> century monk, offered this prayer, *"I no longer want just to hear about you, beloved Lord, through messengers. I no longer want to hear doctrines about you, nor to have my emotions stirred up by people speaking of you. These messengers simply frustrate and grieve me, because they only remind me how far distant I am from you."* Things and buildings can do that, too. They can echo our longing to be with God.

May this be our prayer as we set ourselves again to the high and basic calling of our lives, which is to meet with the Living God who rescues. And may we know that the Lord has promised to answer."



(... excerpt from Pastor Kelley's rededication sermon, April 13, 2013)



## Notes from Consistory ANNUAL MEETING

The annual congregational meeting of the Middleburgh Reformed Church was held on March 10, 2013. After the service of worship, the congregation moved to the fellowship hall for a tasty brunch. The annual meeting then opened with prayer and proceeded with committee reports. This year, the reports were distributed a week before the meeting so chairpersons could focus on the highlights and answer questions on the work of the committees.

Financial reports were given in three parts. The report from the Recovery Fund noted how blessed our church had been by the

generosity of so many who have donated to our recovery from the flood of 2011. The treasurer's report included a summary of our regular annual expenses and reviewed the balances in our various accounts. The newly formed Finance Committee presented the church budget for the coming year. While the budget accurately reflects the anticipated expenses for the coming year, there were concerns expressed that the current rate of giving falls short of meeting these needs. The budget was passed and thoughts were shared on how we may be able to close this gap.

The annual meeting concluded with Pastor Jeff's report and the election of Joan Youmans to the position of elder for a term of four years. We thanked those who have completed their terms on Consistory: Stan Roesler, Charley Shoemaker, and Donna Wynia. Each has faithfully served on several committees and made valuable contributions to the ongoing mission of our church. There are currently two vacancies on Consistory, one Elder and one Deacon, which may be filled by appointment.

## COMMITTEES: THEN AND NOW

In the months following the flood, many members of our church family served on committees tasked with our recovery efforts. At the same time, our normal church committees met regularly to deal with the operation and mission of our church. It has been a very busy time for everyone and truly a team effort to get to where we are. We have worked together to make

some tough decisions and have been blessed by the faithful efforts of all involved. As we near the end of our focus on recovery, we must rededicate ourselves to the work yet to be done.

In Corinthians 12, we are told each one of us is gifted with various talents that we may use to serve the Lord. We must consider the gifts we have been given and how we



use them to benefit our church family, our neighbors and the world around us. Whatever our skills and interests might be, being part of a church committee gives us a chance to share our talents. Together we can accomplish so much more than any one can do alone



## A Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication

**Susan Pendergast, Chairperson**

Over 100 people gathered on a beautiful spring day to lift their voices in word, song, and prayer.

On Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, we were ready to celebrate! Although the sanctuary was still without it's new pews, we couldn't wait any longer to show our joy and appreciation for what the Lord had done for us after the devastating flood of August 28, 2011. Joining the regular congregants were friends and neighbors, flood cleanup volunteers, contractors, representatives from the Albany Synod and the Schoharie Classis, and several ministers who had preached from our pulpit. It was a day full of greetings, memories, laughter, and conversations of hope and renewal.

Planning began in January 2013, about a month after we first returned to our sanctuary for regular Sunday services. Although at that time there was still a list of things that needed to be done, Pastor Jeff urged us to focus on what we had already accomplished, and move ahead with a plan to rededicate the buildings and ourselves to the work of our Lord. The committee of 5 met every week for over 2 months to plan the

event. Invitations were sent out to the long list of supporters who had given donations of money, goods, or services to our recovery effort. Invitations were also extended to our past installed ministers to come and offer reflections of their time spent with us. Two long time friends of our congregation, Nancy McNiven from the Albany Synod, and Rev. Bob Hoffman from the Berne Reformed Church, were also asked to take part in the service. Special music was prepared by Russ Ryan and the choir, aided by several past members and the Sunday School children. The addition of a solo trumpet added to the festive feeling of the day. Members of our own congregation were asked to help lead the service and the ladies of our church provided a lovely reception afterward. Mary Lou Ryan put together a video presentation of the step by step recovery effort which was available for viewing during the reception. We greatly appreciate this visual contribution to the recorded history of our church. It truly documents what a great

undertaking went on from Aug. 2011 to April 2013.

The Welcome offered by Sarah Bramer set the tone of the service when she said, "We are not here today because of a flood. We are here today because of our response to a challenge." She pointed out that



*A special choir led by  
Russ Ryan  
for the  
rededication*

we were here because of the actions of volunteers, the dedication of skilled restoration contractors and the prayers of a people who love and trust in their God. "We have much to be thankful for." (cont. page 4)



## Continued

During the Time of Reflection, Jim Spencer read a letter from past minister Rev. Doug Walrath. In his letter, Rev. Walrath mentioned that although he was minister here between floods, he “quickly understood why the church made such an amazing recovery.” He stated that he observed a “deep commitment and resilience” that characterizes our congregation. He reminded us that our “little white brick church” was built in 1786 when the previous wooden church on Main street was burned in 1780 during the War of Independence. “All of you who now gather take your place in a line that stretches back over 200 years.”

Rev. Paul Ferenczy, pastor from 1970 to 2000, also spoke during the Time of Reflection and said that there were several minor floods during his time with us. “Time after time, one disaster after another, everything was put back in order.” He spoke of

a parable that reminded us that we can “find beauty out of chaos”. He reminded us “God has called us to a special task. Thank you for doing it well.”

Rev. Mary Wisner, pastor from 2002 to 2007, flew from her home in Michigan to be with us. She reminded us, “The church is not a building, the church is the people.”

Pastor Jeff offered a sermon stating, “He did not leave us. He rescued us.” His words echoed the feeling of the day, that the work had been done with the Lord’s help.

It was an emotional and uplifting service. Thank you to committee members Mary Lou Ryan, Russ Ryan, Charley Shoemaker, and Pastor Jeff for their faithful work to make the event joyous and meaningful.

## From the Program

*We rededicate this place, O God, to your worship in prayer and praise. May it be filled with joyous song and uplifting word. May we know your will and experience your peace and power in our lives. Let all who enter here be received in joy and fellowship.*

*O Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we pledge to receive others into your church. We enter your gates with thanksgiving and your*



## PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Leslie Hooper, Chairperson

**“The Church is not a building, the church is not a steeple...” but WOW!** It is the people who have worked so hard to recover our beautiful sanctuary and incredible fellowship hall so we may once again worship the Lord within the walls of our 1786 building and serve the community in our 1998 addition. The balcony is open for those who like an elevated view, and the new pews and pulpit are on the way. The doors to the sanctuary and the rest of the ramp carpeting have been installed.

The piano donated by the Dickerson family, the wall hanging created by Joan Youmans, and the communion table that has been made from the old church floor beams, are perfect for our sanctuary.

On April 6, local boy scouts and their leaders helped our church family get the yard in shape for spring. We picked up debris, raked rocks, and washed windows so everything would look good for the re-dedication service on April 13.

Pastor Jeff has begun work on the shelves and storage for the pastor’s study. He has done an amazing amount of work on our buildings, waiting patiently for time to “recover his office”. Property caretaker, Doug Kingsbury, continues to work on a multitude of projects as they present themselves. Maintaining facilities such as ours requires many hands. I welcome anyone interested in this area to volunteer for the property committee.

## STEWARDSHIP

Stan Roesler, Chair



*“For life itself and loved ones and friends with whom to share our earthly journey, Creator God we thank you!”*



*Thank you, Susan, for sharing your gift of music, **Panís Angelicus**.*

The Stewardship Committee had been hoping to come up with a catchy, concise, “25 words or less” definition of what a Christian steward is. Regrettably, despite much thought and prayer, this has not been possible. “Steward” (and “Stewardship”) are words that need to be reborn, and the birthing isn’t easy. So at a brief meeting on February 24, we chose instead to offer what we feel are some of the *key characteristics* of a Christian steward.

Being a steward is not something one chooses to be. We don’t apply for the job. Scripture says we *are* stewards. It is a given. The challenge is to recognize and willingly accept our steward-ship, which is one of the five “ships” that comprise Middleburgh Reformed Church’s stated mission.

Christian stewards **know** that all they have comes from God, **overcome** the pride of imagining themselves “owners”: they do not own anything, rather, they are caretakers of what exclusively and entirely belongs to God, **use** what God gives them in ways that serve others, **seek** to please God in how they live as well as how they give, **surrender** control (or the illusion of control), and trust in God’s abundant provision, God’s continuing benevolence, **strive** to live an authentic Christian life in a consumer-oriented culture, **live** a life of sharing and **live** gratefully.

So it seems that Christian stewards have an “attitude”, in the best sense of the word. Next

we plan to try and identify some of the key characteristics of biblical Stewardship itself – a lifestyle, a choice, an expression of faith that moves us from creed to practice.

## OCC UPDATES

Mary Lou Ryan

Please remember to continue to think, plan and shop for OCC this summer. Some monthly suggestions include

**MAY** – washcloths

**JUNE** – small toys like balls, yoyos, jacks, jump ropes, cars

**JULY /AUG** – school supplies such as crayons, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, loose leaf paper

**PRAYER** is the foundation of OCC. Please pray for

- Children who receive shoeboxes
- Logistics involved in getting gifts to children
- Pastor and teachers teaching THE GREAT NEWS
- Area teams in sending countries
- National leadership teams in receiving countries
- Mary Lou’s trip to ZAMBIA May 17-25!!

## **CONSISTORY MEMBERS**

### **ELDERS**

Sarah Bramer  
James Spencer, Vice President  
Joan Youmans

### **DEACONS**

Brian DeFeo  
Leslie Hooper  
Karen Miller

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## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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

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## **SUMMER DATES TO MARK**

**May 13** Ecumenical Church series at our church, 7 PM  
**May 19** Pentacost  
**May 28** Schoharie Classis Meeting, our church, 4 PM  
**June 16** last day of Sunday School; children join worship service for celebration today  
**July 15-19** Schoharie Valley Day Camp  
**July 19** Ice Cream Social at Band Concert  
**July 27** Middleburgh Arts and Crafts: church booth TBA  
**August 16** set up for Trash and Treasure Sale  
**August 17** Trash and Treasure Sale

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## **SUMMER REMINDERS**

**Summer Worship** for July and August begins at 9:30 AM. No choir. No Sunday School.

**Camp Fowler**— information and registration available at [www.campfowler.org](http://www.campfowler.org). We have scholarships available; please contact Shawn Smith.

Remember to start saving donation items for our August 17 **Trash and Treasure Sale**.