

MRC NEWS

Operation Christmas Child

By Mary Lou Ryan

By the time many people read this, the over 300 shoe box gifts packed by our church family along with others delivered to our relay center will be on the way to the processing center in Charlotte, NC. “Good News, Great Joy” was the theme of this year’s Operation Christmas Child campaign. Much joy had been shared as we filled our boxes at the packing party. The joy continued throughout national collection week as more boxes arrived and shipping cartons were filled.

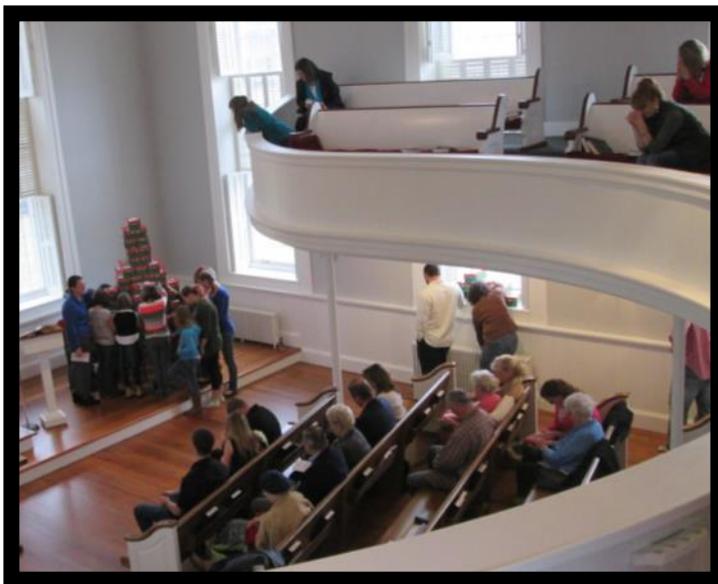


A simple shoe box filled with gifts is a tangible representation of God’s love to a child who has little. Pastors overseas consider shoe box gifts to be keys to the Kingdom of God. The joy experienced by the children who receive the gifts opens the way for the Good News of Jesus to be shared.

Thank you for purchasing gifts and sponsoring shoe boxes in 2013. Thank you for your prayers. Continue to pray that the shoe box gifts will safely reach the hands of the children for whom they are intended and that those who handle and deliver them will be protected from danger. Pray for the children’s hearts to be open to the Good News!

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Above: Members of the congregation get to work at the Annual Packing Party.

The congregation prays over the boxes before they are loaded into shipping cartons.

Updates from the Worship and Sanctuary Committees... *(from Joan Youmans)*

The Worship committee met and has decided to have a Chrismon service. The many symbols of our faith will be hung on the tree as they are sung about and explained by bible verses. The service will be held on Dec. 1st; the start of Advent. Many of our church family members will be participating in this service, including Youth Group and Sunday School members.

The Sanctuary committee has been disbanded even though we have two important items we are still missing. The first is a baptismal font and two local men have been contacted to construct the font. The second is a lectern. Yes, our old one did survive the flood--but is very unsteady. At the last Consistory meeting we voted to order a new one which will compliment the new pulpit. It will be a blessing when both occupy our redone sanctuary.

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

The MRC continues to be a busy place. The lights are on and the parking lot is full for various activities and events several times a month. Donations received help to maintain the buildings and are very much appreciated. We are also grateful to the "army" of scouts and their families who raked leaves on October 26 and to

the wonderful window washers who worked on our beautiful windows to let the "light shine in".

The property committee still has a variety of issues to address. These include flood mitigation in case we have high water in the future, repair of the older sanctuary win-

dows, general maintenance of all parts of the buildings, and how to keep costs under control each year. The property committee welcomes suggestions and comments as well as participation from those looking for a way to become more involved in the life of the Middleburgh Reformed Church.

...and the Finance Committee! *(from Shawn Smith)*

The finance committee met with members of the congregation recently to improve communication and solicit feedback before working on the budget for 2014. In years past, the Deacons or finance committee would look at the previous year's numbers, cut and slash where they thought they could, plug in the new numbers and present the budget to the congregation for a vote. This year, we wanted to provide the congregation with

pre-budget information to allow them to look at the numbers, formulate questions or

Please plan to attend the Congregational Meeting on Dec 8th after worship where a budget for 2014 will be adopted.

concerns, and voice them to members of the finance committee. This year's pre-budget meeting provided the finance committee with some fresh ideas and highlighted some important financial issues that will need attention as the church moves forward. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding the budget, please feel free to contact a member of the finance committee.

The Pastor's Post

In September Lara and I visited Fort Ticonderoga on our way to Vermont. Our interpreter gave us a brief history of the fort. One of my favorite stories he told happened two weeks after Lexington and Concord in 1775. The fort, originally built by the French, was now under English control. It was housing a dozen officers and their families at the time and they thought all was quiet. I imagine it was a great assignment- on Lake Champlain with the Adirondack Mountains at your doorstep. Nothing in the order of armed conflict had happened since 1759 when the French were dispatched from the fort, yet the guard on duty stood in the rain waiting. Emerging from the shadows a group of about 50 men approached the fort. The guard commanded them to stop but they kept coming. He drew his rifle and commanded them to stop. But they kept coming. He waited until they were in range and pulled the trigger. But nothing happened because his powder was

wet. He turned and ran for protection behind the massive stone walls. His mistake this time was that he didn't close door behind him. Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys with colonel (soon to be general) Benedict Arnold joined the revolution by the fort without a shot fired. I wonder how different things would have been for the revolution had the guard been able to keep his powder dry.

Advent is a season the church has built into the year to stop and listen for the Ultimate good the world has known. I hope you can build in some intentional time of listening to Scripture, prayer, to others, to deeply listen to God's Word. The struggle has never been between the white hats and the black hats. The struggle is against making good things the Ultimate thing.

Frequently, the crowds followed Jesus asking him to perform miracles and teach. These

"...build in some intentional time of listening to Scripture, prayer, to others, to deeply listen to God's Word."

are the very things that he came to do and on occasion Jesus withdrew from the crowds to attend to his relationship with the Father. Jesus gave up the seeming good to attend to the Ultimate good. Jesus said he only did what he saw the Father doing (John 5:19). In those moments neither the crowds nor the disciples understood Jesus' work. But Jesus was attentive and ready to be obedient. Paraphrasing Eugene Peterson: busyness is not a virtue, but a spiritual disease. This season may you be able to know the difference between the good and the Ultimate good and may you do what you need to keep your powder dry.

The Remembrance Tree

Each year during Advent, lights are placed on the bushes in front of the church in memory or honor of loved ones. The names of those being remembered are written on a "Remembrance Tree" which will be displayed in the coming year. Donations for each light will be used to help with expenses for the youth of our church to attend the Excel and Break Out Youth Conferences. Anyone who would like to remember a loved one and make a donation for this year's Remembrance Tree can see Leslie Hooper or Ellie Spencer.



2013 Ham Supper a Success

The 'job list' was updated, the posters were out, the tickets were printed, the signs went up and we were ready to go! The **33rd Annual Ham Supper**, held on Nov. 9th, served 500 guests and fed 60 workers. Although the number of dinners served was down a bit from previous years, our enthusiasm was not. We cooked, sliced, scooped, served, washed and greeted our guests with a smile.

While still tweaking our new floor plan, the service flowed smoothly to our guests and the rave reviews of the food flowed back to us. I heard comments that included, "The best ham ever. Where do you get them?" "This is the only squash I ever eat." "I never miss this supper." "Everything tasted so good." Congratulations to our whole church family for another successful supper.

Our Church building and foyer were lit up to welcome in the community. Our recently completed sanctuary was the object of curious guests and I heard several comments of how "beautifully simple" it is and "how proud you must be". Both are so true. We are so proud that it is now, and always will be, open for anyone to come in, sit, enjoy its simple beauty and be touched by the love of God.

In the foyer, Mary Lou Ryan had a display and video presentation of the Operation Christmas Child program. This is a wonderful program that touches the lives of children all over the world and introduces them to the love of Jesus Christ. Mary Lou introduced us to the OCC pro-

gram several years ago and now it is a major part of our mission outreach. Guests waiting in the foyer were welcome to ask questions and get more information on how they could become involved.

As this years Ham Supper chairman, I would like to thank all the committee chairpersons who helped to get the workers organized and ready for our event. It takes everyone working together to make it happen. So, to all those who came early to set up, spent 3 hours working & serving, or stayed late to clean up, a huge thank you.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank 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 the potato bakers for providing the butter and sour cream. Thank you to Meg and Betsy for making the awesome raisin sauce. Thank you to the pie bakers for all those delicious pies. Thank you to Christine, Christopher, Roxanne and Grace for cooking and delivering the unbeatable and very popular squash.

Finally, a warm thank you to our community of church



friends that come to support us year after year. 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 share the Good News.

Some Stewardship Wisdom...and Humor *(compiled by Stan Roessler)*

“God is justly honoured when he is acknowledged to be Author of all blessings; it thence follows that they are all received from his hand, as to be attended with unceasing thanksgiving; and that there is no other proper method of using the benefits which flow to us from his goodness, but by continual acknowledgement of his praise and unceasing expressions of our gratitude.” - John Calvin, III, xx, 28.

“There are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, mind, and the purse.” - Martin Luther

“I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.” - Martin Luther

“...it is important for us to realize that we are sharers, not just givers. The distinction between a sharer and a giver is very important. The giver is under no obligation; s/he gives from a strictly voluntary point of view. The sharer is under an obligation, although it is an obligation of love. It is a responsibility of relationship or partnership. As a giver, I can choose to give or not to give to the United Way, for example, because I am under no obligation. But I cannot choose whether or not to meet the needs of my own children, at least to the extent that I am able. I am under the obligation of our relationship and of love to meet their needs. It is the same in the Body of Christ. We belong to one another in a relationship of koinonia. That relationship obligates us to fulfill the terms of the relationship: to *share* with other members of the Body, either those personally in need or those involved in gospel work. So the sharing of our financial resources with others in the Body of Christ is an obligation, but it is an obligation of love...”

- Jerry Bridges, in *True Fellowship: the Biblical Practice of Koinonia*

“No one would remember the Good Samaritan if he’d only had good intentions. He had money as well.” - Margaret Thatcher

“In Revelations we read of a book which no man could open. Some believe that was the pocketbook.” - Anonymous

“Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe.” - Clarence C. Stoughton

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Ecumenical Food Pantry

In early November, local Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts held their annual “Scouting for Food” food drive. The scouts picked up and delivered over 1,700 food items that were distributed to both food pantry locations at St. Mark’s and here at our location. Thank you to all the Scouts, leaders and parent helpers who collected the food and to all you who donated items.

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.

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.

“The only right stewardship is that which is tested by the rule of love.”

- John Calvin



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

So why, you may ask, is one so interested in preserving the old records of the church? Why attach importance to the past experiences of our church? Are we living in the past, blind to actions of the present and failing to anticipate with any degree of wisdom, the future? Maybe so, but there is much to be learned from the past.

Eccl. 1, v. 9: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun".

In the last Newsletter, News from the Archives told us how the 1730 Ziele Bible came to America and into our possession. A lesson in devotion. Recently we have been reviewing the Heidelberg Catechism which dates back some 450 years. And surely Peter Ziele knew the Catechism "which was used not only to reach the faith, but also to unite various church factions in the German Palatinate in a common confession." (p. 164 Body & Soul)

Sunday School off to a great start *(from Sarah Bramer)*

Sunday School began on September 8th and we've been enjoying a great group kids ever since! We have 24 students regularly attending and we are really excited that 8 of those students are new this year! We use a curriculum called "Living Inside Out" which is very engaging for our kids. Sarah and

Joel Bramer and Lara Kelley are our Sunday School leaders this year.

The Sunday School kids lent a special hand to the Ham Supper this year, by decorating a prayer banner that was hung in the hall during the supper and some of our older students were there to help.

**Mark your calendar
for our Christmas
Program on
December 22nd!**

Youth Group is active again *(from Kim Smith)*

Meetings are held on Sunday evenings from 7-8:30PM for students in grades 6-12. We currently have about 8 High School and 10 Middle School students regularly attending. Meetings begin with an hour of games and activities and end with a devotional time or video from the NOOMA series. Several Youth Group members were on hand to help in various ways at the Ham Supper. We recently held a scavenger hunt in Crossgates Mall; group members had to find things like a job application, a man named "John", or the biggest bag they could find.

Coming up: January 18th & 19th High School members will be at-

tending the EXCEL conference in Saratoga Springs. In March Middle School members will be attending the BreakOut Conference, also in Saratoga Springs.



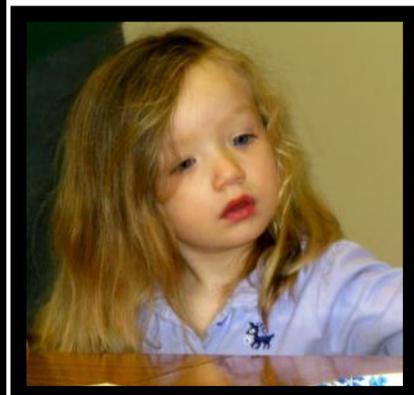
NET: The Missing Ingredient

NET (Neighbors Eating Together) dinners have been lacking one important ingredient—more members of our congregation! Plan to attend the next one to discover what you have been missing. NET Dinners are in full swing on Wednesday nights from 5:00 to 6:30 PM. We encourage everyone to get involved by providing food when it is our turn and by sharing this wonderful ecumenical experience in our community. The dinners are free, but the fellowship is priceless.

Our coordinating committee (MaryLou Ryan, Ellie Spencer, Karen Miller, & Leslie Hooper) will choose menus, put out sign-up sheets and make sure we are ready to host dinner on the first Wednesday of each month. **Our next time to host will be at 5:00 PM on Dec. 4.** NET dinner rotations continue with Our Lady of the Valley on the 2nd Wednesday, United Methodist on the 3rd Wednesday and St. Mark's Lutheran on the 4th Wednesday. In months with a 5th Wednesday, we will host a community pot luck dinner in our fellowship hall. Due to the holidays, there will not be NET dinners on Nov. 27, Dec.25 and Jan.1.

SPECIAL DATES TO NOTE:

- *Nov. 27: Community Thanksgiving Eve service, hosted here, 7:00 pm*
- *Dec. 1: First Sunday of Advent. Chrismon Service with Pot Luck Lunch and activity to follow*
- *Dec. 4: NET Dinner at our church, 5:00-6:30 pm*
- *Dec. 6: Veggie Tales Family Movie Night*
- *Dec. 8: Communion
Congregational Meeting following worship*
- *Dec. 22: Sunday School Christmas Program*
- *Dec. 24: Christmas Eve Candlelight service, 7:00 pm*



**CONTACT
INFORMATION**

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James Spencer, Vice President

Sarah Bramer, Elder

Joan Youmans, Elder

Brian DeFeo, Deacon

Leslie Hooper, Deacon

Karen Miller, Deacon

Sunday School: 9:45 am

Sunday Worship: 11:00 am



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!