

MRC NEWS

GLEANINGS ABOUT GRATITUDE, and THANKS-GIVING

By Stan Roesler

In the February Newsletter, we explored something known as **The G-Force** (or, for the musically inclined, **Living in the Key of G**). The G-Force is the very strong connection between God’s amazing, un-merited gift of grace and our choice, our decision, to respond with gratitude, and generosity. Thus, the three G’s – Grace, and Gratitude, and Generosity, are all closely linked together, and form the spiritual foundation of Christian stewardship. We also examined the first “G” - Grace - which is literally the gift of God’s unconditional love.

This month, we consider the *second* “G”, Gratitude. Karl Barth writes that “Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace as thunder follows lightning.”

In *Space for God*, Don Postema points out that “Gratitude receives. It also recognizes the giver. Gratitude *recognizes* that a gift has been given, a favor has been done by someone. There is a gift and a giver. But there is more. Gratitude also calls for a *response* to that gift. We thank the giver with an *expression* of appreciation – a handshake, a hug, a note. A *gesture* of gratitude completes the exchange, closes the circle, lets the love flow back to the giver. Actually, the exchange is more like a spiral than a circle – a spiral in which the giver gets thanked and so becomes the receiver, and the joy of giving and receiving rises higher and higher.” Postema’s personal spirituality is based on Calvinism. Accordingly, he draws on Calvin’s *Institutes* for additional insights about gratitude. For example:

you are “almost overwhelmed with such great and copious effusions of Gods beneficence...and surrounded, withersoever you turn your eyes, by such numerous and amazing miracles of God’s hand, that [you] never lack matter for praise and thanksgiving”.

- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, xx, 28

Continued on page 5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Property Updates | 2 |
| Packing Party | 2 |
| Summer Worship | 2 |
| Pastor’s Post | 3 |
| Sunday School | 4 |
| Stewardship cont. | 5 |
| Food Pantry | 5 |
| Church Archives | 6 |
| OCC Update | 6 |
| Spiritual Life Update | 7 |
| Upcoming Calendar | 7 |
| More Pictures! | 8 |

Updates from the Property Committee *(from Leslie Hooper)*

The Property Committee has tried to keep members informed of property issues through the church newsletters. If you would like to look back at some of the articles you may find them at middleburghreformed.org. Rather than review again what has already been reported, this report will focus more on what lies ahead. The fact is no one knows what may or may not happen to our property in the future. The efforts of the property committee have focused on current use of our facilities, ways to improve use while reducing costs, and preparation for future events.

One thing that continues to be true is that our members are vital participants in maintaining this beautiful facility we have been blessed to have and share with others. Our church buildings provide space for a variety of community groups hold meetings and fundraisers, as well as for private events and social gatherings.

When the budget for 2014 was adopted in December 2013, the amount for paying an outside business to clean our buildings was cut in half. The property committee decided to seek volunteers from our congregation to sign up for a month to clean the sanctuary. Guidelines and supplies have been made available to volunteers and this seems to be going well. There is a special feeling of peace and joy doing work in this space. Meanwhile, our property caretaker, Doug Kingsbury, has taken on the task of cleaning the fellowship hall and surrounding rooms. While he has blessed us with his time and talent in so many ways, there will still be projects which require more of us to pitch in.

Recently the property committee has been working a plan to protect parts of our buildings from future flooding. Not knowing when it will happen or how high the water might be creates a lot of uncertainty. Being as prepared as possible is all we can do. With that in mind, our committee would like to put together a "Flood Preparation Team" of 8 to 10 people who would be willing to assemble ahead of a viable flood threat to move some things and get the building "ready for water". Please contact Doug Kingsbury if you are willing to be a member of this team.

The Property Committee is very interested in welcoming new members. You don't have to be a handy man or a expert gardener to be a productive member of this committee. All you need, is an appreciation for our property and a willing heart. Please let Leslie or Doug know if you would be willing to join them on the committee.

*There is a special
feeling of peace
and joy
doing work in
this space.*

Preparing for Our 2014 Packing Party

As we look to next fall's shoe box collection season, we are collecting gifts to pack in our boxes. Suggested things to buy:

June - T-shirts

July, August - loose-leaf paper, pencils, crayons, pencil sharpeners

Please keep in mind that we will also need to support each box we pack with a \$7 donation to cover the costs of shipping and discipleship materials. Perhaps your family will make an OCC bank to start saving for that now



Summer Worship

Beginning July 6th, and continuing through August 31st, we will move our time of worship to 9:30 am. Choir and Sunday School will be on Summer vacation and will resume in the fall.

On July 27th, there will be a Community worship service at 11:00 am on the High School front lawn. Bring a lawn chair and pack a lunch for further community fellowship immediately following the service.

The Pastor's Post

The other day the girls and I visited the Palatine House in Schoharie. They were able to see a glimpse into how they lived 'back in those days,' as they like to call it. They tried rolling a hoop with a stick, made a yarn doll, grave stone rubbings, and dumplings over the fire. We had a glimpse into how they lived 'back in those days' without the hassle of long days on the farm and no running water. They were amazed how things have changed. Yet, what makes it so real is that so much hasn't changed. They ate, played, and worked and had pleasures and joys like us. Life may last longer for some of us, but it is no more joyful or less painful. It's humbling to think that we are no closer or further away to eternity than saints that have gone before.

We come into this world listening to the wrong voice for our happiness.

We are born into life to change. We change because life comes at us or we change by accepting the invitation by God in Christ. Real change from takes time. It takes a lifetime, in fact. Just because I think it, does not make it so in my life. I would have completed all the things I needed to do around the house already if all it took was thinking! I react and say things before I know what's coming out of my mouth. I have feelings for reasons hidden to even myself. God invites us to let him change us. There is no secret or trick; prayer and Scripture are two main ways God changes us.

Matthew the Poor writes:

If you wish to free your soul by the shortest and simplest way, sit down every day under the disciples of grace. Examine your thoughts, movements, intentions, purposes words and deeds in light of God's word... The moment you realize at the bottom of your heart that you are nothing and that God is everything, then the truth shall set you free. *Orthodox Prayer Life*

As we catalogue our thoughts and emotions in front of the Word, the Holy Spirit invites us to let God rewrite our story in light of God's Great Story. A deep disappointment in school can be re-named as a moment of God's faithfulness to a greater calling. A relationship of shame with your father can be retuned to hear the unconditional acceptance of the Father. We come into this world listening to the wrong voice for our happiness. Jesus invites the tired and worn out with heavy burden trade it in for his way. Jesus asks us: *how's that going for you? Are you ready to give up your way and take on my way?* This is the project of being a saint.

It's been over a year now since we started the Ridder Church Renewal Process. The team has started sharing their learning and we look forward to doing more. At our retreat in May we learned about generating and sustaining tension. Our goal is to join God in his work in the world. Setting this as a goal already creates the tension: *how am I doing at this?* Back in those days the saints have had ways that they have done this. The team was given an assignment to describe our current reality in terms of this goal. We have to answer questions like: what are we doing in the name of mission? What are the needs of the community? The first step of getting this accurate will take time. We look forward to sharing with you along how this is impacting us personally as well as where we see God at work around us. This is the change that we all long for. Looking forward to seeing you out there.

In Christ,
Pastor Jeff

Another year passes in our Sunday School *(by Sarah Bramer)*

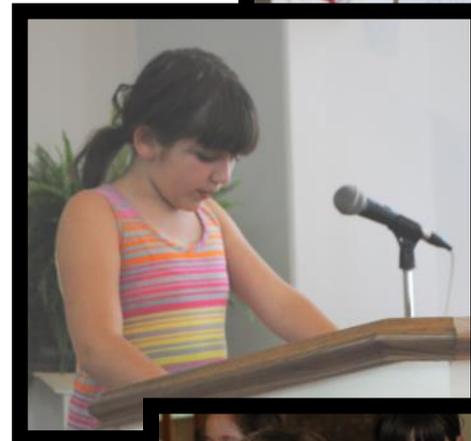
In September, we began another year of Sunday School. There's always a nervousness about beginning again. How many children will return? Will we have any new children join this year? How will we answer all their questions?

Well, the answers came from week to week as we waded through our curriculum with an incredible group of kids, that fluctuated, but at one point reached as many as 27!

We talked about topics including our core values as Christians, our friendship with Jesus and others, God's "game plan" and we took a look at each part of the Lord's Prayer and what we really mean when we say it.

After our Christmas and Advent programs during worship, we decided to do our part by signing up for a month to clean the sanctuary. In May, we dusted, swept, vacuumed, straightened up bibles and hymnals, and learned that we are serving God when we are serving others. It was a great new way to learn an old lesson. We also began talking to the kids about more ways we can give and serve. Currently, we take up an "offering" collection in Sunday School and that money goes into the plate receipts for the week. We started talking to the kids about what ways they would want to use the money. Some interesting insights and suggestions came forth. Look for more on that in the future as we move toward a very intentional, missional view of giving in Sunday School.

We ended our "year" on June 8th. The children "took over" worship that day and shared the scripture verses that their lessons had been based on and some of the key ideas they learned. School's out for summer, but we'll be back at it in September. Your prayers for our Sunday School kids and their families are appreciated.



Gleanings about Gratitude continued *(by Stan Roesler)*

It has also been said that genuine gratitude is a first cousin to joy. G.K. Chesterton puts it this way: “Gratitude is the true test of happiness. Those who view life as a gift and who receive all things, including life itself, with gratitude are likely to be the happiest people on earth. Among their number are faithful Christian stewards who realize that everything comes from God and who view their material goods as unmerited blessings to be received with glad and grateful hearts.”

All of that said, gratitude involves a conscious choice; one can also opt for *ingratitude*. In our culture, notions of entitlement run rampant, i.e., a belief that I am only getting my due (or complaining about what I lack because I think I’m *not* getting my due.) Biblical stewardship provides an antidote to entitlement.

One way to foster an attitude of gratitude is to keep a “blessings journal”, the first line of which might read “The pages of this journal are mine to remember God’s goodness, grace, and love.”

***“Grace and
gratitude belong
together like
heaven and
earth.”***

Ecumenical Food Pantry *(by Russ Ryan)*

The food pantry is run by volunteer from Huntersland Methodist Church, Middleburgh United Methodist Church, Our Lady of the Valley, Middleburgh Pilgrim Holiness Church, and the Middleburgh Reformed Church, people from these churches and civic organizations (i.e. Rotary) also donate food supplies to help keep the shelves stocked. The food pantry also benefits from the postal and Boy Scout food drives. Dollar General also had a food drive which was coordinated by Charley Shoemaker.

The food pantry is also a member of the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York. This membership allows us to apply for grants and purchase food at reduced prices. We have two grants from the Regional Food Bank. One grant is for operating expenses, which pays the church our percentage of the heating and electric bills. The second grant allows us to obtain food from the regional Food Bank. Because we receive these grants we have to meet certain criteria for safety and distribution of balanced nutrition. We passed in both areas receiving very strong marks in the nutritional value of the choices we offer clients.

We were able to provide food to everyone who came to the food pantry. This past year (2013) saw 273 visits serving a total of 861 people.

People ask “what does the food pantry need?” First, we are in need of any and all non-perishable food. Whatever we get does get given out. Second, we need you. This is a place for you to give your time and talent. Whether you take a permanent time or serve as an emergency substitute we have a place for you to serve.

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

Recently, a few interested church members met in the Meeting Room to work on the archival materials which have survived “Irene”. The meant assembling everything, sorting it, deciding what, if anything, might be beyond saving, filing appropriately what was there and storing it all in acid-free files and boxes. We met several times to categorize everything. We often felt an eerie presence of past followers of our Lord. A list of the total inventory of 17 boxes was presented to Consistory in 2013 to attach to the church minutes.

We were gratified to find, among other things, nearly 200 years of Consistory minutes (some a little water damaged), many Bibles (including the Ziele Bible), most church membership records and the “Danforth Scrapbook”, which is an invaluable collection. It contains materials relating to the church centennial, bicentennial, tricentennial of the village in relation to our church, Bible school, Sunday school, women’s and men’s groups and RR&E records.

We need to be ready to move our valuable “paper treasures” to dry ground when a catastrophic flood is predicted. At present, the Bibles are stored on higher shelves in the storage/workroom. The boxes are on two carts which can be wheeled to the foot of the attic stairs to be hauled up if need be. There are no other plans right now.

The committee recognizes the need to have a collective picture of present-day projects and events to leave for future generations. Highlights should include a growing Sunday school, community outreach (NET dinners, use of our facilities), the 2011 flood and all that was involved in its aftermath, our Samaritan’s Purse activities and ecumenical programs within the Middleburgh community. Anyone with materials of any sort is urged to share them so that we may leave a clear picture of our generation of faithful followers of the Lord.

An Operation Christmas Child update *(by Mary Lou Ryan)*

On April 6, representatives from Operation Christmas Child attended our worship service to express the appreciation of Samaritan’s Purse for our having hosted a relay center for five years. Gaye Newlun, the Regional Director of OCC and Lyndsey Sullivan, the NY Greater Capital District Area Team network coordinator, presented a framed certificate of appreciation to the church. The certificate reads:

Operation Christmas Child Recognizes

Middleburgh Reformed Church

In appreciation of 5 years of partnership with Operation Christmas Child as an official drop-off location.

Your love for the Lord Jesus is demonstrated through your service and compassion for others.

*God bless you for making a difference in the lives of children and their families
through Operation Christmas Child.*

Franklin Graham, President, Samaritan’s Purse

*“Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them
for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Luke 18:16, ESV*

Since 2008, more than five thousand shoe box gifts have been received and placed in shipping cartons at our relay center. Mrs. Newlun explained that a single shoe box impacts not simply the one child who receives it, but seven to ten other people as well. Using “God’s math,” that means we have had a role in touching tens of thousands of lives with the Gospel message through simple shoe box gifts! We look forward to reaching out to even more children and their families and friends in 2014.



Spiritual Life Committee update *(by Leslie Hooper)*

The committee meets about six times a year to work on the goals and responsibilities set for this committee. These include suggestions for evening discussion groups, communication through the newsletter, coordinating fellowship activities and efforts to involve our church family in various aspects of church life.

Last fall, the evening discussion group looked at the book Body and Soul by M. Craig Barnes. It was an in-depth look at the 450 year old Heidelberg Catechism. The book for this past spring has been Spiritual Disciplines by Richard Foster with discussion held on Monday evenings.

Several times a year we publish a newsletter filled with reports and announcements concerning the work of our Church. A special thank you to Sarah Bramer for her wonderful work in editing the articles sent to her and putting together a beautiful newsletter. Those who receive the newsletter are encouraged to make the switch to the digital version. The pictures on line are in beautiful color and the money saved in printing and postage can certainly be used in other ways. Thanks also to Pastor Jeff for his updates on the church website, Facebook page, and the monthly bulletin insert.

The churches of our community have continued to support the NET dinner initiative with four churches hosting dinner on the first four Wednesdays of the month. In months with a fifth Wednesday, our church is providing the location and participants are bringing great food for a community “pot luck” dinner. The Middleburgh Churches Series was held once again this spring. The topic for this year was “Preach the Gospel at All Times and if Necessary Use Words”. This was the third year the churches have hosted an opportunity to share their faith and facilities with each other, and of course refreshments.

SPECIAL DATES TO NOTE:

- **June 22:** *Baccalaureate, 7:00 pm - St. Mark's*
- **June 29:** *A special worship service based on the recent Middleburgh Churches Series, 11:00 am*
- **July 6:** *9:30 am Worship Begins (through July and August)*
- **July 14—18:** *Schoharie Valley Day Camp, Schoharie Reformed Church*
- **July 15:** *Property Use: A conversation 7:00pm*
- **July 25:** *(tentative) Ice Cream Social at the Summer Band Concert—High School*
- **July 27:** *Community worship, 11:00 am - High School lawn*

**CONTACT
INFORMATION**

Pastor Jeff Kelley

827-8785, home

email: jeffa.kelley@gmail.com

Church

827-5134, office

email: reformed@midtel.net

Mailing Address:

PO Box 112

Middleburgh, NY 12122

Property Caretaker

Doug Kingsbury

827-7791

email: douglk@midtel.net

Consistory Members

Sarah Bramer, Vice President

Kim Smith, Elder

Joan Youmans, Elder

vacant seat, Elder

Leslie Hooper, Deacon

Arlene Kingsbury, Deacon

Karen Miller, Deacon

Mary Lou Ryan, 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!