

MRC NEWS

Editor's Note: As I read over the submissions for this issue of the MRC News, I realized what ample and amazing opportunities we have been blessed with. One of them even came with a subtitle about opportunity. Middleburgh is a small place, but there is no shortage of chances to do God's work. When we are out in our community, we ARE on a mission. "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, *even to the least of them*, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40) Opportunities of all shapes and sizes abound, and no matter how "busy" we are, they will find us. We need to learn how to recognize them. With that bit of inspiration in mind, I took the liberty to "theme" this issue accordingly. Therefore the article subtitles you will see are my own additions, and I hope that the authors will extend me grace for this (quite literally) 11th hour revelation and editorial decision. *-Sarah Bramer*

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OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD: Opportunities to Serve

(from Mary Lou Ryan)

Christmas may seem a long way off, but it is never far from the minds and hearts of those who are dedicated to the ministry of Operation Christmas Child. As a church, we have been a part of that team for over a decade. As we look forward to the 2015 shoebox collection season, here are some ways in which you may be involved:

- purchase gifts and pack shoeboxes on your own
- purchase gifts for the church packing party
- sponsor boxes that will be packed at the packing party (A donation of \$7 per box pays for shipping and *The Greatest Gift* booklet)
- participate in the packing party
- volunteer at the OCC relay center (Nov. 16-23)
- provide snacks for donors and volunteers at the relay center
- **pray for the children who will receive the gifts, those who will disciple the children, and OCC volunteers and staff**



Gifts Still Needed for Our Packing Party: bars of soap, washcloths, toothpaste (expiration date Aug. 2016 or later), pencils, crayons, loose-leaf paper, small stuffed animals, T-shirts for 2-4 age group and 10-14 age group

From the Property Committee: Opportunities to work *(from Leslie Hooper)*

If it has been a while since you have been inside the MRC buildings, you should make time to stop by for a visit or for worship on Sunday morning. We are truly blessed to be able to worship the Lord in our beautiful 1787 sanctuary and we are happy to be able to share our fellowship hall with our community. We are grateful for donations of time and money to help us maintain our church property, but in all honesty, more time and money are needed to do everything that needs to be done.



There are many opportunities for members of our church family to participate in the care of our church property. A few folks pitched in on April 25 to do some spring cleaning in the building and the Boy Scouts once again helped with yard work on April 26. Volunteers have signed up to clean the sanctuary each month. Thank you to those who have made time to work on our church property. A list of tasks still to be done is posted on the foyer doors. The property committee meets once a month and welcomes suggestions and new members.

In addition to regular maintenance, our property caretaker, Doug Kingsbury, has resumed work on the sanctuary windows—one window at a time. Because of the 2011 flood, six of our 36 sanctuary windows had to be completely replaced. The other 30 need major repair after 225 years of exposure to the elements. This requires removing storm windows, scraping peeling paint, repairing broken glass, re-glazing each 8 by 10 pane, and painting everything. If you see Doug, please thank him for the hours of work he has done on this project.

Prior to the flood, the property committee intended to have some maintenance work done on the bell tower and steeple. Following the flood, focus shifted to recovery of the ground floor spaces and the work high above the ground was put on hold. This summer, a professional painter will be employed to scrape, prime and paint the bell tower—a job that is dangerous and requires special equipment. The cost of this work and the need to rent a special lift is not in the budget, but the work needs to be done so the money will come from savings.

Finally, as beautiful as our River St. location is, the possibility of future flooding is always a concern. At this time, the cost of flood insurance for our property is beyond the limits of our current church income. Consistory decided to establish a fund for repairs that may need to be done in the event of future flooding. Proceeds from this year's Trash and Treasure Sale (see page 6) will go into this "self-insurance" fund.

The Pastor's Post: An opportunity to reflect

I heard the sound of the whoosh before I saw the falcon. At first I thought I had only imagined hearing the rush. But then I saw the peregrine falcon turning around to take another pass at the dog and me. This time it was squawking and then it headed right towards us. I knew what to do against a bear- but a falcon? We walked quickly off among the trees and waited. The dog didn't even notice the bird. Walking home I started reflecting on my parenting and how fiercely I protect my nest – my kids. Is it enough? Is it too much? My kids occasionally ask to watch a movie that has a rating above their ages. They begin the argument by saying: *but my friends get to*. They are savvy. Even at 5 years old they know how to question my competency as a parent. I am generally against an isolationist policy- either at home or in international politics, but it's looking like a better and better option these days. Once, I heard myself replying: 'but if the world says it's PG-13, then it's definitely not for you!' (none of them are 13 yet, nor will ever be). Even the world knows something about protection. Jesus said: "If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

I started thinking about how Jesus is amazingly gracious and fiercely protective of children. He said: but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble (to cause loss of faith)... (Matt 18:6). I read on and more carefully and as it turns out, it's not just about the children. 'Little ones' is literally: the *mikron* (Greek) ones. The Little aren't just kids.

Jesus is talking about the church in Matthew 18. The kingdom-community is passionate about caring for the little ones. The little ones are that way to the world- like the poor and the insignificant; they are the 'hard to get along with' and 'not the great ones among us.' The Kingdom is not to be great and have greatness, but to care for the little ones. Jesus is inviting a change of priorities in community. Jesus then follows up with that story of the lost sheep (vv. 10-14)- the little one is sought and found even though there are 99 waiting. The more we have a heart of gratitude towards the One that found us, so too we'll join the Father seeking the little one. This summer we have many formal chances to practice this together. There are our efforts we have had in the past- Food Pantry and Operation Christmas Child and the many ways the Joshua Project is getting into people's lives- including the summer lunch program at the school and their backpack food program. Many of these families and children would not eat lunch were it not for this. Community the Jesus-way is done loving the little ones personally, as people. They are not an object or task to complete. I wanted more clarity on parenting when I started my wondering about protecting my kids. But it turns out the Father expands the terms of what a parent really is.

- Pastor Jeff

Sunday School: Opportunities for learning (and fun!) *(by Sarah Bramer)*

And so, another Sunday School “year” is coming to a close. I feel a bit like a broken record when I talk about Sunday School, more specifically when I talk about our great students. I am constantly aware of their wonderful natures, their kind hearts, their sense of responsibility, their compassion and their absolute love of fun! It is our hope that they are growing in faith and understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

This year we looked at the epic adventures of Genesis, the extreme make-over of having a Christ-like attitude and during Easter, we looked at Jesus as “the Ultimate Transformer”. We learned about kings and queens of the Bible who, even with their great power, chose obedience to God. We discovered some of the miracles that Jesus performed and we read examples from the Bible about how we can work for God, no matter where are.

One of our goals in Sunday School this year was to encourage the children to think intentionally about their own giving. In our January update, I reported that with the offering money they collect each week, they decided to sponsor 10 Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes. In April, they collectively decided to send \$200 to the Children’s Hospital at Albany Medical Center. They still have money left over! I can’t wait to hear how they choose to use what’s left and look forward to sharing that news with you.

Something else a little new this year, we are undertaking a summer service project through a group called blood:water mission. The kids will be setting up and manning a lemonade stand. We’ll send all their “LEMON:AID” profits to blood:water mission, where they will be matched and used to bring clean drinking water to people in Africa. Look for their booth at community events throughout the summer, including the Arts & Crafts Festival (July 25), the Community Worship service (July 26) and at our “Trash and Treasure” Sale (August 15).

I’d like to thank the families of our students, the Consistory and the congregation for their support of our program. I’d like to thank Lara and Joel for teaching every week and sharing their gifts. Thanks also, to Pastor Jeff for his help with special projects and guidance.

An Opportunity for Mission Funding

Are you aware of a need in our community or beyond? Has the Lord put it on your heart to do something about it? The Board of Deacons would like to assist you through a grant from the Benevolence Fund. (\$400 is earmarked in the fund for new missions.) To be considered for a grant, submit a brief proposal stating your goal and indicating the amount of money you are requesting. Your proposal may be given to Leslie Hooper, Arleen Kingsbury, or Mary Lou Ryan.

WE Events: Opportunities for fellowship *(by Lara Kelley)*

Members of our church family have been having fun getting together for our multigenerational WE events. So far there have been three WE events focusing on the story of Noah and the Ark, God's promises to Abraham and the Ten Commandments. At each event we share a meal and there is a combination of teaching, crafts, singing and skits. These have been great opportunities to connect as a church family while learning. It has been wonderful to see the different perspectives ranging from 4-year-olds and up! Look for more WE events to come!

Financial Peace University: An opportunity for change *(by Leslie Hooper)*

Financial Peace University, a course designed by Dave Ramsey, was offered at our church this spring. Nine families met on nine Sunday afternoons to watch a course video and discuss various financial topics. Each meeting opened and closed with prayer and a meal was shared by those participating. Homework consisted of reading on each topic and meeting as a family to make decisions on saving, spending, budgeting, getting rid of debt, and giving. Thanks to course coordinators, Vern and Laurie Gordon.

Ridder Church Renewal: An opportunity for growth *(by Joel A Bramer)*

The Ridder journey will continue for us, with Jeff traveling in November for a pastoral component and for Sarah, Mary Lou, and Joel, "Phase 2" of our missional learning will commence at our next retreat in May 2016.

It is a long process, but a worthwhile one, we believe. During a few Saturday morning events in the winter and spring, we discussed in small group sessions how we wear our anxiety, how deeply it impacts us as individuals and as a collective, and how contagious it can be. It clouds our judgment and can prevent us from seeing and properly pursuing the preferred future God has for us. We also shared our thoughts on the experience thus far in written "journals". Copies can still be obtained, if you'd like to read what we've been learning, thinking and praying about.

We look forward to meeting as a team over the summer so that we may reflect on our learning, as well as find opportunities to share more about what we have discovered with the congregation and our community.

**An opportunity to get rid of your unwanted or unneeded stuff,
while helping the church raise money. Or...**

Trash and Treasure Sale

Saturday August 15, 2015

9 AM—3 PM

Help is needed for:

Set up on Friday, 8/14 (all day beginning at 8:00 am)

During the sale Saturday, 8/15 (beginning at 8:00 am)

Clean-up crew Saturday (at 2:00 pm)

**** Items to Donate ****

toys	dishes/cookware	jewelry	sports equipment
rugs	drapes/linens	collectibles	holiday decorations
tools	bedding	craft supplies	garden supplies
books	furniture	small appliances	assorted household items

The following items CANNOT be donated; clothing, computers and/or
TV monitors

Please bring donations on Friday, August 14 from 8 AM to 8 PM. Some limited storage space is available. Starting August 1, smaller, boxed items can be placed in the classroom. Advance storage of larger items is not possible because our building is used by community groups.

If you have questions or suggestions about this event, please call Leslie Hooper (827 4754). On Friday and Saturday (Aug 14 & 15) call the church kitchen phone (827 5134) during the day.

Proceeds will go to the Middleburgh Reformed Church Flood Insurance Fund

An Opportunity to reach out and serve

The Joshua Project summer lunch program will run from June 29 through August 28. MRC will staff the program July 6-10. Anyone who wishes to serve during that week should call Mary Lou at 827-4093. To volunteer for any other days, call Bonnie Jorgensen at 827-6430.

Worship Committee: Opportunities to Praise God! *(by Joan Youmans and Sarah Bramer)*

The Worship Committee has been looking at our service and tried out a bit of a change this spring. Announcements were moved to the end of the service for a one month trial, but they were returned to their traditional “before the service time slot”. Also this past spring, the committee tackled the annual question: “what time will summer worship be?” We pooled opinions and decided, along with Consistory, that services will be held at 11:00 am year round. Russ Ryan has reported that he’s having some issues with the organ. He has been in touch with an organ repair and tuning expert to see what options may be available. This is an ongoing dialogue for now, stay tuned (pun very intended) for updates on the organ in the future.

There are always opportunities to be involved with worship, by reading scripture during service or providing the children’s message. A sign up sheet is in the foyer. It also provides opportunity to sign up to provide coffee hour after worship.

Ecumenical Food Pantry: Opportunities to share the bounty *(by Russ Ryan)*

The Ecumenical Food Pantry is very grateful to the Middleburgh Reformed Church for providing a place for our operation. The small room behind the kitchen houses all the food that we give out and provides a bright, clean space for the volunteers to interact with the clients as they distribute food to them.

This year we have had an increase in usage. From January to the end of May the volunteers have served 414 clients. Numbers are also a problem as our grant runs from July to June, so from July 2014 to May 2015 (one month to go) we have served 921 clients.

The increase in clients means we are always in need of donations and workers. The food pantry accepts donations of nonperishable food items for distribution. We also accept monetary for the purchasing of food items. We also are always in need of personnel to staff the pantry. Our hours are Wednesdays 4 – 6, and Saturdays 9 – 11.

If you have any questions or wish to become a volunteer please contact Russ Ryan.

**CONTACT
INFORMATION**

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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

Mary Lou Ryan, Deacon

vacant seat, Deacon



CALANDAR OF EVENTS

- JUNE 14th: Communion, Church Family Picnic
JUNE 21st: Baccalaureate Service, 7:00 pm
(at the Methodist Church)
JUNE 26th: High School Graduation
JULY 6—10th: Help the MRC and the Joshua Project
serve free lunches (details pg. 6)
JULY 24th: MRC hosts refreshments at the
Community Band concert, 8:00 pm
JULY 25th: Arts & Crafts Festival; look for our
Sunday School kids' LEMON:AID stand
JULY 26th: Community Worship, High School lawn
AUGUST 9th: Communion
AUGUST 15th: Trash and Treasure Sale, 8:00 - 3:00,
LEMON:AID stand
SEPTEMBER: Sunday School resumes
OCTOBER: NET Dinners return, MRC hosts on 10/7
OCTOBER 11th: Communion
NOVEMBER 4th: NET Dinner
NOVEMBER 8th: Operation Christmas Child Packing Party
NOVEMBER 14th: Annual Ham Supper
NOVEMBER 16th-23rd: Operation Christmas Child
Collection Week
NOVEMBER 26th: Thanksgiving
NOVEMBER 29th: Advent Begins

*“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is
dressed in overalls and looks like work.” (Thomas Edison)*

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!