

MRC News

JANUARY 2018

I hope this newsletter finds you well at the start of a new year.

This is the time of year where we, as a church, have been looking back and looking ahead. It's important to remember and recognize the past faithfulness of God. Like the psalmist: *When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those dreamed.... The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy* (Psalm 126). God's salvation is what gives us bearing for today so we can be a blessing to others in the same ways. As a church, we continue to prayerfully discern and work on responding to the Lord's call.

We are looking ahead by working out our mission and vision statement. If we did our work well, the statement captures both who we are and our hope for the next few years. During the ReFrame course last fall several of us learned and imagined what it means to be ambassadors for Christ in the world (eg. 2 Cor 5:20). We have a mission, we are on mission, this is God's salvation. Jesus said to go into the all the world and make disciples of all the nations (*ethne*) (Matt 28:18). This applies to all Christians, not just to the original apostles. That also means we ourselves are first learning the ways and means of our Lord. Eugene Peterson writes in *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, the learning is more like an apprenticeship in a workshop than a classroom. The setting is our life. The means is a prayerful scriptural imagination. The life we are called to is not a glamorously curated social media feed full of cropped images leaving the ordinary (and ugly) bits out. The Christian life happens at the speed of relationships; with others, with God, with our selves. We seek the peace with our selves and others. This is slow work. It's radical work against the culture of feeling good and getting our own way. But it's the life-of-God work that is moving towards our True Home. So we practice and repeat, pray and converse, open our lives with a godly hospitality to one another and others not like us.

And finally, thank you from me, Lara and the girls. I don't say it enough- it is a privilege to work among you and along side of you for the sake of the gospel- in this place at this time. The seasons of life continue to unfold and reveal new facets of the Lord's grace. We are grateful for you and being a part of your life.

May you meet our Lord in the work,
Pastor Jeff

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Youth Education	2
Church Archives	2
Fellowship	3
Property	4
OCC	5
Benevolence Fund	6
Food Pantry	6
Ham Supper	7
Worship Committee	7

Youth Education *by Sarah Bramer*

As we began a new “school year” we found ourselves adapting to fit the needs of our students. Kim Smith needed to step down from teaching, and so Pastor Jeff is now leading the Sunday morning discussions for our 6th—8th students. They are working their way through the bible from front to back, reading selected passages and chapters on their own and then discussing them as a group. Joel Bramer, Lara Kelley and Sarah Bramer continue to lead classes for Pre-K through 5th grade, continuing the Dwell curriculum we began using last year. As has been our practice for several years, we begin each Sunday with singing worship songs and collecting the children’s offerings. Since our last newsletter, the students used

some of their weekly offering by making a donation to the Joshua Project, to help with the summer lunch program. Our worship singing is a blend of contemporary Christian music and more traditional “Sunday School” songs. We try to find something for everyone, from our youngest 4 year old students to our 13 year olds. It’s tough, but this is a great group of kids and they make it easier by being so accommodating and willing to learn.

In December, our students presented a Christmas program called “The Evening News”. This was a different twist on the traditional Christmas pageant. We try to keep our Christmas programs interesting and fresh, while still keeping them biblically sound. Once again, the kids

showed they talents by acting as reporters, shepherds, angels, kings, Mary and Joseph...we even had our own sheep to make the shepherds more authentic.

At present, our Youth Education program serves 21 students, representing 10 families. Thank you to the parents of our students, who bring them faithfully on Sunday mornings and support our efforts to share the Word with them.

You can support Youth Education at MRC, by joining the Christian Education committee, praying for our leaders, students and their families, and supporting families in church by helping with nursery duty, stocking activity bags that kids use during worship and enjoying the energy that these families bring to our MRC family.

Church Archives *by Marian Bouck*

Documents relating to our historic Low Dutch Reformed Church are safely stored in archival boxes in the Consistory room. In accordance with requirements for a disaster plan for historic libraries and archives, everything is now on carts to be easily moved to the attic stairs in case of severe flood warning. Other options are on the table. At present several people add clippings and pictures which portray the every day activities of our present congregation. It’s fun to know that today’s happenings become tomorrow’s history. Please, we need someone to take over this fun task for our congregation. I will acquaint you with what we do now and you may have some terrific new ideas!

Fellowship Committee *by Mary Lou Ryan*

The members of the fellowship committee thank the church family for their support in 2017. The contributions of your time, talents, and resources made it possible for the committee to host many activities for our church family and the community. These include pastor appreciation luncheon, two NET dinners, appreciation dinner for the Middleburgh Village and Town officials and employees, three funeral luncheons, meals for the Regional Synod assembly, church picnic, summer band concert ice cream social, OCC packing party lunch, and annual meeting lunch.

The fellowship committee looks forward to serving MRC in 2018. The participation of the church family in the various activities facilitated by the fellowship committee is a way of living into our mission and vision statements as we serve one another and members of the community. The hospitality we demonstrate is a result of the transformation in our lives as followers of Jesus.

The following are some activities planned for the new year:

NET Dinners – Feb. 7 and Apr. 4

Family Game Night – see below

Classis Meeting Dinner – May 22

Appreciation Dinner for Middleburgh Library and

Dr. Best House Staff and Volunteers – June 1

**Please join us for our
1st church-family-
community game
night!**

**Bring a favorite board
game, deck of cards or
just yourself to share
in an evening
of fun together.**

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH

6:30 PM

**PLEASE BRING A DESSERT
OR SNACK TO SHARE.**



Property Committee *by Leslie Hooper*

Our last newsletter reminded us that "we are blessed to have a beautiful facility on a very pretty piece of property" and that "keeping our building and grounds in good condition is a shared responsibility." We are fortunate to have people and resources available for most of what needs to be done. We are again asking for volunteers to clean some areas of our building while our property caretaker continues to take on the bulk of the cleaning responsibilities. Thank you to Doug who does so much and to everyone who is participating in the care of our buildings and grounds. Many hands make.....

Hi-lights of 2017

** The owner of the Bulls Head made a donation for some of the church beams stored in Marian's barn. You can see them as part of the restored Bulls Head Pub in Cobleskill.

**The children's nursery was moved to a larger space because we have been blessed by many more young children as part of our church family. The former nursery is now a small classroom.



** In May, a very large tree came down in the wind. No one was hurt, but cleanup was major and some minor repair was needed on the shed,

** Consistory met with the Property Committee to discuss, review, and revise expectations and compensation for the Property Caretaker.

** Pastor Jeff became the contact person for those requesting to use our facilities.

Future property projects include; repair of the church sign, replacement of the shed doors, painting of exterior wood trim on the fellowship hall, and construction of stor-

age and shelving in the large classroom.

Sign-up sheets and guidelines for those who wish to volunteer to help with cleaning the sanctuary and other areas of our building are in the foyer.

Anyone who would like to get involved with property issues is invited to join the Property Committee. We try to have a short meeting once a month and schedule work days in the spring and fall.

Photo credit: Bob Roney

Operation Christmas Child *by Mary Lou Ryan*

In 2017 our filled shoeboxes were arranged to highlight the word **GO**. It reminded us that Jesus commanded us to go into all the nations making disciples. (Matthew 28:19) **GO** also reminded us that the receiving of a shoebox is a **Gospel Opportunity** for a child. Local church leaders share the Good News with children at shoebox distributions, and each child takes home *The Greatest Gift* booklet. Children are invited to attend *The Greatest Journey* classes where their discipleship is nurtured. They learn about the power of God's word, trusting Jesus as their Savior, and how to share the Gospel with family and friends.

As well as the "out there" benefits of the project, Operation Christmas Child also touches the lives of those who support it by buying and packing gifts, sponsoring the shipping costs, and prayer. We ourselves grow as disciples by using our time, talents, and resources, and we and serve as a beacon within our own communities as we support and encourage others to reach out to children in need.

Collection week 2017 was a busy one at MRC as we served as a drop-off site. A total of 1,530 gift-filled shoeboxes were delivered by representatives from twenty-eight churches and by several individuals. They were greeted and assisted by volunteers from 2nd Reformed of Howes Cave, Pilgrim Holiness Church, Our Lady of the Valley, Reformed Church of Berne, and

MRC. We prayed for God's blessing to be with each donor, the shoeboxes, the children and their families, and all who are part of the shoebox journey and the sharing of God's story. We are VERY grateful to the able young men of Boy Scout Troop 2 who loaded the filled shipping cartons onto Barber's truck. We thank Barber's Farm for providing the truck and Cindy Barber for driving to the collection center in Latham.

As someone who has had the opportunity to inspect shoeboxes at processing centers and also to participate in placing them in children's hands in Zambia, I am keenly aware of the importance of packing quality boxes. I believe we accomplish that well at MRC, and I thank you for your support in making that possible! Learning about children such as Jaki from Guatemala who had to share one toothbrush with the other girls in her orphanage caused me to encourage you to pack multiple toothbrushes in our shoeboxes. I am very pleased to say that each box at our packing party had at least two toothbrushes, and many had six! Our boxes also included other hygiene items, school supplies, clothing items, and toys. Ours were lovingly packed with both practical and fun



items and sealed with our prayers. THANK YOU!

Since the adoption of our mission and vision statements, we have been asked to consider what we do in light of those statements. I believe that OCC demonstrates the transformative message of Jesus. This matches our mission statement. Our vision path is one in which we seek to grow as disciples through prayer, worship, education, and service. We are certainly serving those who receive our gifts. I believe we can do more to grow as disciples through our prayer life. I know that I need to become more disciplined in praying for OCC, and I invite you to join me on this journey. I have made a commitment to the OCC Prayer Network. I hope you will too! Please see me for more information on how to begin.



Benevolence Fund *by Mary Lou Ryan*

Summary of Spending ~ January 1 – December 31, 2017

La Casa del Maestro (Peru)	\$1,600.00
Grace Beekman (mission trip)	\$300.00
Operation Christmas Child (shipping)	\$900.00
Project Night Night (homeless children)	\$100.00
Emergency Support for Local Families	\$1,849.52
Relief for Puerto Rican Farmers	\$405.00
Total:	\$5,154.52

I have often heard the phrase “blessed to be a blessing.” It is such a simple phrase, yet it describes exactly how we are able to serve those in need in our community and beyond through the Benevolence Fund. A portion of your weekly offering goes to support the fund. \$4,000 is allotted from the General Fund to the Benevolence Fund. Additional monies come from special Advent and Christmas Eve offerings. The fruits of your generosity are truly blessings to be shared! Thank you.

Food Pantry Report *by Russ Ryan*

Instead of the standard year-end report, I hope this narrative will help you understand the work of the food pantry.

First thank you to all the volunteers and substitutes who sit in the food pantry on Wednesdays or Saturdays waiting for clients to arrive. Sometimes it is busy, other times very quiet. You volunteers are great to work with. Someone always steps up to help cover the hours that the food pantry is open. One volunteer, who was going away for Christmas, was afraid she might get sick. She asked me to arrange for people she could call to cover for her, just in case.

Second thank you to all the churches, civic organizations, and individuals who donate food and/or money. Between monetary donations and

grants we certainly have the resources to keep serving clients. It is very easy for me to order bulk quantities from the Regional Food Bank and get cases of food at one time. However I think about the donor who puts together a bag containing a box of pasta, a jar of tomato sauce, a can of fruit, a can of vegetables, and a box of cereal. That donor is trying to help one person at a time.

Third it may seem strange to say thank you to our clients, but as the clients come in for food they also open up and talk. We are not therapists but we listen and many times it helps us understand who uses the food pantry. We know we have what we call over users but we do have clients truly in need. Clients tell us about high energy bills, medical problems and bills,

temporary loss of jobs, marital problems, spousal losses that reduce benefits, and just not enough income to cover basic needs. When we hear these stories we realize how lucky we are and that there is real need in our community. The food pantry is open Wednesdays 4 to 6, and Saturday 9 to 11, also by appointment. We are staffed by volunteers from the Hunter-land Methodist Church, the Middleburgh Methodist Church, Our Lady of the Valley, Middleburgh Pilgrim Holiness Church, and the MRC. We receive donations from all of these churches as well as Rotary, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Postal food drive, and individuals. We will continue to operate as long as there is a need.

2017 Ham Supper Report *by Susan Pendergast*

The 37th Annual Ham Supper, held on Nov. 11th, was another successful venture for our church family. We served 454 dinner guests and fed approximately 50 workers. For the second year in a row, we offered a ½ price ticket to any Veterans and Current Military personnel. I am happy to say that 60 men and women took advantage of that, and we were glad to show them our appreciation and support of their service to our country in that small way. Our profit of \$2,945.00 will be put to good use in our church's general fund. The continued success of this event is only possible because we work side by side with friends and neighbors, who have the same goal, to support the work that we do

here at the Middleburgh Reformed Church. All of us working together made our Ham Supper a success.

As coordinator of the Ham Supper, I would like to extend a Thank You to all the committee chairs who helped me in getting ready for our event. It takes many weeks of planning to make it all happen and it would not have happened without them. So, to all those who helped put together lists, went shopping, placed orders or drove to pick up our hams, a heartfelt Thank You. And to the many people who come early to set up, spend hours working and serving, or stay late to clean up, another big Thank You.

I also need to 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 Meg and Betsy for donating the ingredients and making the delicious raisin sauce. Thank you to the pie bakers and the "Squash crew" who spend time baking those two very popular items on our menu.

Finally, a warm Thank You, to our community of church friends who come to support us year after year. Thank You and God Bless you all.

**Editors Note: Thank you, Susan for the hours you spend coordinating this event.*

Worship Committee *by Joan Youmans*

As the body of Christ the mission of Middleburgh Reformed Church is to demonstrate the transformative message of Jesus Christ. Our vision is to grow as disciples through prayer, worship, education and service.

The Worship Committee is working to bring us closer to our mission and vision statements.

At present we make sure worship services are covered in Pastor Jeff's absence, provide sign up sheets for liturgical readers and coffee hour providers, change paraments according to the Church calendar and provide decorations and banners. The committee is involved in planning for special services, has oversight of the drama team and liturgical arts guild, and secures persons to format, print and fold weekly bulletins.

We have 4 to 5 meetings a year. They are held at night and are usually short. Our next meeting is Jan. 24, 2018. To join this committee contact Joan Youmans 518-827-4217.



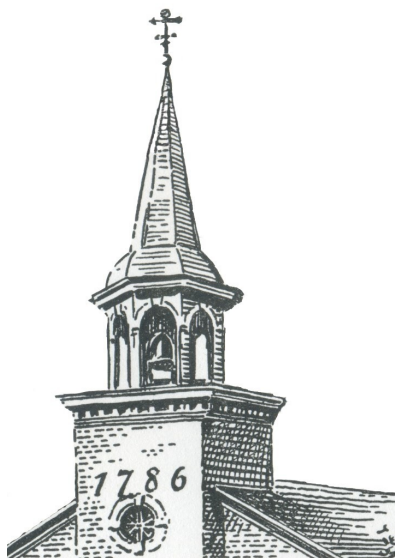
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vacant seat, Deacon
vacant seat, Deacon



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!