

# MRC News

JANUARY 2019

I hope this finds you well that that you have had a wonderful Christmas season and a great start to the new year. You may, like me, have to look back at the pictures to remember it all. As a church, we also have much to be grateful for. I am grateful for you and for sharing your lives in this place. It isn't always neat and tidy, but it is life and God is involved. We can approach with confidence and take this adventure full on. As you look through this newsletter you'll see reports from our annual meeting- which reflect what we've done together and the plans for the coming weeks.

**Watching Our Stories-** Do you ever catch people telling the same story again? I'm sure I've done it. It's what we do with old friends. With new friends, it might be a little odd. As we listen to the stories around town (and there are a lot) you can hear both the hope and despair; appreciation and frustration (maybe not from the same person). But listen to the stories and you can hear their hearts- what do they love? What do they fear? What are their hurts? And successes? In watching these stories, we can get curious about them, ask questions, laugh and lament with them. But then we also have our own story – and how God he disrupted our plans. Regardless of our experiences, age, education- and how it's different from others- we can listen. As we pray, God shapes understanding and our stories. Praying can also reveal our stories to ourselves. And when we notice patterns- we can get curious about our stories. Why do I like to win arguments? Why do I always feel picked on? Or why do I need to complain and be heard? So watch your story – it is probably telling you more than you care to know about yourself. And watch your neighbor's story. They are trying to share themselves as well.

**Stories of Worship-** One story I am sensitive to is how we talk about church and worship. What are we doing at 'worship? Is it an event that we come to watch? like a sporting event or a book reading? a concert or play? a lecture or legal proceeding? In practice, throughout history the church has bounced around all of these options to understand what we do in worship. Parts of them are helpful though each have their liabilities. Today, I believe our threat is entertainment. So much of our life is wrapped around being entertained- news, education, leisure, technology, even work. We think something is amiss if it's not entertaining. Bring that to God and we'll be disappointed. Worship is not to be a spectacle that titillate the senses. I recently noticed that in a "worship catalogue" next to the keyboards were smoke machines. Is this what God wants for us?; to be manipulated into having an experience?

*(continues on page 5)*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Youth Education	2
Church Archives	2
Mission	3
Property	4
OCC	5
Food Pantry	6
Fellowship	6
Worship	7
Benevolence	7

## Youth Education *by Sarah Bramer*

Our Youth Education students finished their 2017-2018 year in June with an appreciation breakfast for their parents. The students cooked eggs and sausage and served fruit and bagels and beverages to their families. At the breakfast, we decided as a group that their 2017-2018 collection money would be shared with two charity groups that help children. One was Share Our Strength and their “No Kid Hungry” program. This national program supplies breakfasts, summer lunches, nutrition education and advocacy for children and their families. The other group selected was Birthday Wishes, a Massachusetts based charity that provides birthday celebrations for children in homeless and domestic violence shelters. This was a fun (and yummy!) way to end the year.

After a summer of fun and adventures, we reconvened for another school year of

Sunday Morning Youth Education. The leadership met over the summer and discussed a few changes. First of all, we are so happy to welcome two new small group leaders! Maria Funicello is leading the 4th and 5th graders, a group previously led by Joel Bramer. We thank Joel for his years of service as a small group leader. Jonathan Meredith has taken the role of leading the 6th grade and up group. This group was previously led by Pastor Jeff. Jonathan’s participation with the kids has allowed Pastor Jeff to begin a Sunday Morning Adult Ed class.

Thank you Maria and Jonathan for giving your time and talents to our Youth Education program!

Youth Education classes meet from 10:00-10:50 am most Sundays. 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

Marian Bouck has been overseeing our church archives, as a labor of love and service, for many years. Now, she is needing to pass this task on to someone else. Marian would be glad to show someone the current archives and offer her support and knowledge to whomever is willing to step into this role. Please prayerfully consider if that someone might be YOU!

## Mission Report *by Pastor Jeff Kelley*

This past July twelve of us headed out to the Youngstown, Ohio area for a mission trip. Our goals were simple- to go and to learn what it was like to help others by going somewhere else. We also hoped that it would shape us personally as well as help our mission-imagination at home. We were not disappointed even though our plans for what we would be doing were changing up to the day we arrived. Why Youngstown? There was a church that made it their mission to host groups to come it. They provided the sleeping and eating spaces, along with planning our work in a variety of settings. In the end we worked with two different organizations. For two days we pulled weeds and some canned jams at Where Goodness Grows ([goodnessgrows4all.org](http://goodnessgrows4all.org)). This group started out of a church that took over a commercial greenhouse on 64 acres. Goodness Grows raises vegetables to sell while providing job and life skills training for people with challenging mental or physical factors. It was great to see how they worked and hear the impact on individuals and their community. They also expressed the challenge of communicating their mission even within their church family to share what they do. Not an uncommon challenge! For our own group, we were happy to help pull weeds even though it was an all-too familiar task, but it did get tedious. We also worked for a morning with the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Organization ([www.yndc.org](http://www.yndc.org)). They have been around for ten years to fight blight in the downtown areas of Youngstown and now help thousands of people and impact hundreds of properties a year. They are now the planning and development board for the city. We cleaned up a ravine-turned storm drainage ditch. It had not been done in a very long time, if ever. The work was messy but purposeful. We met and heard the stories of several Christians that had moved into the neighborhoods with the express purpose of helping neighbors and the neighborhoods. It seemed to us that the main champions of the group were Christians. We also met a pastor that was restoring a commercial space that had been used for prostitution and a drug-house. It was well on its way to becoming a gathering space for the community, especially in the colder months. We were blessed to see their sacrificial work with no expectation of it paying off typical terms. Their challenge is a challenge of many cities with dramatically shifting economies over the last 40 years.

As a group we also had some fun together, visiting parks, sights and a particular ice cream stand several times. We were grateful for the experience and look forward to future opportunities to serve home and away. We are also grateful for one another in the group, as well as the congregation for sending us.

On behalf of the group, Pastor Jeff

Megan Bramer, Sienna Kelley, Alyssa Coons, Allison & Aaron Coons, Craig and Tracie Anteman, Audrey, Ed and Kathy Jenkins, Jeff Kelley, Susan Pendergast

As for me, it impacted me personally as I felt that it showed me that after a year long treatment schedule to fight cancer, that I was able to go somewhere and help people out and that I was capable of helping in whatever way was needed. I also felt like it was a learning experience for future trips to learn about how to make a trip like this work and how we bonded as a group. As for Audrie, we chatted and she liked helping people and I feel as though it will be a positive part of her upbringing, in the same way that my parents instilled in me a life of volunteering growing up.  
— Tracie Anteman

## Property Committee *by Leslie Hooper*

The Property Committee begins every meeting giving thanks for God's love and how He has blessed us. We ask for guidance in our decisions and wisdom to see how we can share our buildings with others.

We have been blessed for the past several years to have Doug Kingsbury as our Property Caretaker. He always went above and beyond what we asked of him. In May, he and his wife Arleen began the process of moving to Virginia to be their daughter, Chelsea and her family. We can not thank them enough for their years of dedication to the Middleburgh Reformed Church.

While many members of our church family continue to help with voluntary cleaning of some of our building, we need to have the larger areas of our building clean and ready for church community use. Kellie Rogers has taken on the responsibility for cleaning our fellowship hall,

kitchen, nursery and bathrooms. Our new property caretaker is Tom Rogers, who will be responsible for ensuring our buildings and grounds are safe, comfortable and ready for use. His duties vary from week to week and season to season. Pastor Jeff reviews building use requests and maintains the church calendar. The Middleburgh Reformed Church is a very busy place. Not only are our buildings used for worship and church family activities, but for many community events and some private social gatherings as well.

### Some highlights from 2018:

-Ron Barnes built some cabinets in the large classroom.

-John Funicello did buildings and grounds maintenance in June and July.

-Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and assisted with spring yard work.

-David O'Connor brought dirt to fill in a depression on the property.

-Foyer bricks were cleaned and sealed.

-Shed has been partially cleaned out to make room for church items in storage.

### Future plans include:

-Renovations to the church sign

-More signage on property to assist those using our facility

-Investigation roofing options for the sanctuary.

-Church family work days in the spring and fall

Thank you to everyone who takes part in the care of our building and grounds and to those who have made donations toward upkeep. Thank you to members of the property committee for being part of the "team" (Aaron Coons, John Funicello, Tom and Kellie Rogers, Holly Shaul, Leslie Hooper).

## Operation Christmas Child *by Mary Lou Ryan*

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY! We had much to celebrate this year. 2018 marked the 25th anniversary of Operation Christmas Child. It also marked MRC's 10th year of hosting a drop-off site. This year we dedicated 380 shoeboxes packed by our church family.

We look forward to learning where our shoeboxes are sent for distribution.

We trust that the children will be delighted with their gifts and that their hearts will be ready to receive the Greatest Gift of All - Jesus!



### *Pastor's Page continued from front cover...*

People are seeking religious experiences as a way to forget they are human. But it is in worship that God wants us to remember and experience that we are human. And it is good! though painful and frustrating sometimes. Worship is fundamentally relational: by the Holy Spirit we participate in the Son's life with the Father. In the Trinity we find our life with others. This is approaching true prayer. Wherever you are- find a place that tells the truth by knowing who God is and who you are made to be. We are pressing on to be a community like that.

Reconfiguration- We are working on readjusting our leadership and decision-making body and process. There will be more details elsewhere, but basically, we want to broaden beyond the Consistory the formal leadership of the church. For lack of a better term, I'm calling this forming a "leadership team." It would be made up of Consistory and other, including committee chairs. I have come to describe leadership as going first. It's not telling people what to do or spinning inspiring rhetoric. So, in a very practical way we are all leaders in families, work or just showing up in the village. As Christians, we don't believe a great degree of influence is the way to win hearts and minds. Influence is a part of the powers of the world that Jesus upended and dismantled. But leadership- we are all called to it, just in different ways. So- among our church, we'd like to broaden and share more of what we are doing with one another. We want to keep encouraging the work we are doing while taking on new things. We want to care for one another well. We want to bear witness as a church to God's work in our lives and in the world. We hope this change will be helpful.

peace!

Pastor Jeff

## **Ecumenical Food Pantry** *by Russ Ryan*

The Middleburgh Ecumenical Food Pantry is located here at our church. The pantry is manned and supported by the community. Hours are Wednesdays 4 to 6, Saturdays 9 to 11, or by appointment. During the hours of operation two volunteers are on duty. Their main job is to serve clients who come in to the pantry in need of food. When there is a lull in client activity many times the volunteers restock the shelves, check expiration dates, make a list of what is need, or dust and clean. There are times when they work very hard with many clients coming for food and other times when there is no activity. From January 1st to November 23, 2018, the food pantry served 473 people. We are in a good place right now both financially and with food items. However do not forget us, as we give out more food than we take in. The food pantry does need help in the form of people. Right now we are depending on a limited number of people to fill the schedule. More help is needed in order to staff the pantry. Please consider giving of your time.

## **Fellowship Report** *by Mary Lou Ryan*

Do you enjoy planning and hosting events that bring people together for fellowship and good food? If your answer is YES, please consider serving on the fellowship committee. The committee offers opportunities for you to devote some of your time and talents in showing hospitality to our church family, members of the Middleburgh community, and others. The fellowship committee hosted a number of events in 2018. They included two NET dinners (Neighbors Eating Together), Family Game Night, funeral luncheons, Classis dinner, farewell luncheon for Doug & Arleen, and summer band ice cream social. Additionally, the committee led the congregation in recognizing the

contributions to our community made by the Middleburgh Library and Dr. Best House staffs and volunteers at the third MRC Appreciation Dinner. The fellowship committee will soon host an appreciation luncheon for a very special group in our community. Our guests will be members of the clergy. The group usually meets at a restaurant for their monthly meeting, but in December they will meet in our fellowship hall with a lunch provided by the committee. The work of the fellowship committee took a somewhat different turn in the fall when we hosted the Harvest Bazaar. The purpose of the bazaar was to raise funds needed for the donation to accompany some of our Operation Christmas Child

shoeboxes. Thanks to the WONDERFUL support of the church family, the bazaar was a success! We raised \$1,058. Please save the date of September 21 for next fall's Harvest Bazaar! A new initiative of the fellowship committee is to offer opportunities for various groups within our church family to enjoy fellowship together. In October, several women enjoyed lunch together at Indian Ladder Farms. At this time, plans are underway for a men's breakfast, family game or movie night, and a mother/daughter tea. We hope that members of the MRC family will grow closer as result of their participation in these events. If you have more ideas for fellowship activities, please share them with the committee.

## Worship Committee *by Joan Youmans*

The Worship Committee is committed to the Mission and Vision statement of the Church. Our vision is to grow as disciples through prayer, worship, education and service.

This past year we have had four meetings. In January the idea of a little gift for first time attendees was introduced. Also an information brochure was discussed. So far we would like to include Vision and Mission statement, Worship and Sunday school times, Church photo, condensed history, special events, church phone numbers, contact information, food pantry information, etc.

As a committee we oversee the sign-up for liturgical readers and coffee hour providers. With Pastor Jeff's help we get bulletins ready for Sunday. Paraments are changed according to the church calendar. We plan for special services during the year: Maundy Thursday, Palm Sunday, Easter, Thanksgiving Eve, Advent, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

If we cannot find a substitute speaker when Pastor Jeff is away we plan the service using in-house church members.

Our budget covers guest speakers, special music, Christmas decorations, window candle lights, Christmas Eve candles, Advent wreath

candles, palm branches communion cups, etc.

From time to time Pastor Jeff has a song for us that is not in our hymnal on a separate sheet in the bulletin. Please help us save these sheets so they can be reused—give them to Donna Wynia, Joan Youmans or put them on the window sill just outside the sanctuary door.

It takes everyone working together to make any committee work. Thank you to all those who helped us this past year.

## Benevolence *by Mary Lou Ryan*

The Benevolence Fund has been administered by a committee comprised of sitting and past deacons. Expenditures from the fund in excess of \$250 must be approved by the consistory. Decisions of the committee are based on the belief that as custodians of God's resources, we allocate outreach funds to people, programs, and institutions with a sincere desire to promote God's work through the church in the community and the world.

In 2018, monies from the Benevolence Fund were used to support two international ministries. La Casa del Maestro (Sandi & Albino Rodriguez/Peru) was supported in the amount of \$1,675. \$900 was donated to Samaritan's Purse for the transportation, processing, and shipping of 100 Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes, for distribution training and materials, and for *The Greatest Gift* booklets.

Some local needs were also met through the Benevolence Fund. Gas cards were purchased for people with emergency travel needs. Additionally, winter outerwear was purchased for a family of four.



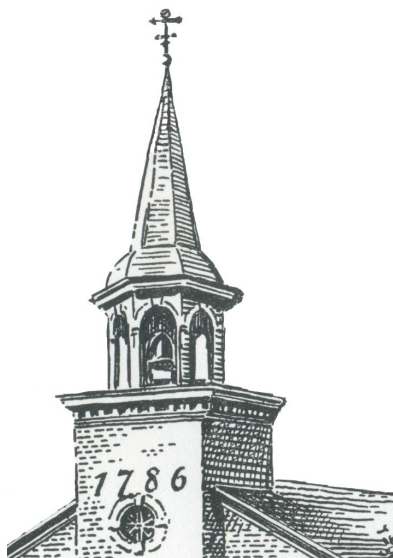
## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

*Pastor Jeff Kelley*  
827-8785, home  
email: [jeffa.kelley@gmail.com](mailto:jeffa.kelley@gmail.com)

*Church*  
827-5134, office  
email: [reformed@midtel.net](mailto:reformed@midtel.net)  
Mailing Address:  
PO Box 112  
Middleburgh, NY 12122

*Christian Education - Sunday*  
*10:00 am*  
*Sunday Worship 11:00 am*

*Consistory Members*  
Susan Pendergast, Elder  
Sarah Bramer, Elder  
*vacant seat*, Elder  
*vacant seat*, Elder  
Allison Coons, Deacon  
*vacant seat*, Deacon  
*vacant seat*, Deacon  
*vacant seat*, Deacon



## **2018 Financial Summary**

We were blessed to finish 2018 being able to do the ministry that we wanted to do this year and not dipping into our reserves or investments. We received \$147,294- across all the accounts. 90% of that came in through plate receipts (general donations). The expenses were \$128,000. A full financial report is available, see Pastor Jeff. For 2019, our budget is about \$125,000.

## **Photos from July 2018 Mission trip in Youngstown, Ohio**



## **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](http://www.middleburghreformed.org)

Please contact us via email: [reformed@midtel.net](mailto: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. You can also receive weekly emails from Pastor Jeff with prayer requests, events updates and musings.

P.S. You can also find us on Facebook!