



# Middleburgh Reformed Church

## Newsletter

Spring 2025



We're excited to share with you the life of our congregation over past few months, and what we are looking forward to!

### Operation Christmas Child

– Betsy Meredith

Middleburgh Reformed Church members have been faithful and enthusiastic shoe box packers for many years, as well as serving as a drop off location. As our congregation changes, and sees many needs all around us, we will be continuing to pack boxes, but on a smaller scale. We hope to use our God-given resources in a variety of ways.

Our goal this year is to pack 50 quality shoe box gifts. They will each contain school supplies, a few hygiene items, and lots of fun. Of course, each box will have a WOW gift.

Betsy Meredith will be Project Leader this year. She is maintaining a spreadsheet to assure that we have enough items for each box. If you purchase items for these boxes, please let her know, or bring them to church to leave in the donation box, so she can have up-to-date records.

There will be a packing party in the fall to fill the boxes before National Collection Week.

Deveral Watson is holding some sessions for making jump ropes from tee shirts. They will be on Mondays from 1:00-3:00. Feel free to come later or leave earlier. The dates are: April 28th; May 12th; June 2nd; and June 16th.

## Holy Week & Easter

### ***Our Worship Together***

- Maundy Thursday, 7 p.m. remembering the last supper and Jesus' approach to the cross.

- Easter Worship, 11 a.m. with the choir and horns

### ***Community Gatherings***

- Good Friday Stations of the Cross Walk, 12 p.m. We begin at the Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church (corner of Wells Ave. & Main St.) and walk down Main St. and River St ending in front of our sanctuary.

- Easter Dawn Community Worship, 6 a.m. gathering in our parking lot for a brief prayer service, then breakfast in the hall. welcome help.

## Neighbors Eating Together Season, 2024-25

- Kellie Rogers

What a wonderful season we had!! Everyone in our church family had a hand in making these dinners run smoothly and ‘tastefully’ THANK YOU to you all for helping this season! The meals wouldn’t have been successful without you all! The menu we had was very easy for us to execute and serve, so we will use a similar menu for the following season with some slight changes to keep cost a little lower. The highlight (or maybe just for me) is our February meal, the Chili Cook Off! This meal seems to be the one that brings in the crowd and really gets the community involved! And the Churches going head-to-head for best Chili really gives people a giggle! As such in January, St Mark's started a ‘Soup Off’ where our church supplied a soup to be voted on. Paul Ferenczy made a soup for our church this year and well we didn’t win;



we did come in second place. I am so proud of our church family for being so close that these meals don’t feel like a task that needs to be done, but as a time for us to spend together and enjoying seeing the hall filled with people whose hearts and souls we have touched.



## Summer Day Camp!

- Lara Kelley



We’ll be hosting this year’s Day Camp August 4th-8th from 8:30-12 p.m. Last year Day Camp was so much fun that we are doing it again! The curriculum is from A Rosha, a Christian creation care ministry that helps Christians recover the biblical calling to care for creation. Their day camp curriculum is fun, engaging and teaches kids the wonder of creation- and our proper response in stewarding it well. It’s not just entertainment or a metaphor for God- it shows how we can directly participate in God’s loving work. Through daily learnings, nature study and play, children will learn that all of God’s works are good and that they themselves are beloved creations.

The camp is a joint effort with Our Lady of the Valley Roman Catholic Parish. If you would like to help, let one of us know- Pastor Jeff, Lara Kelley or Betsy

Meredith.

Volunteer forms are available and there are opportunities to teach, learn and have fun alongside kids in our community.

Registration information can be found at: [middleburghreformed.org/2025-day-camp](http://middleburghreformed.org/2025-day-camp)



## Sharing Our Building

- Leslie Hooper

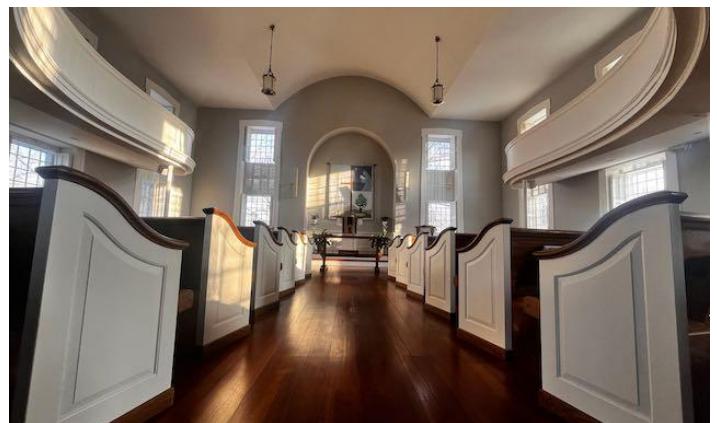
Our church is blessed to have a beautiful building which we share in a variety of ways. Our building is handicap accessible with ample parking which makes it ideal for many reasons. Our ability to share this space is part of our mission to the community and we are thankful to receive donations for building use.

American Legion and Middleburgh Rotary hold regular meetings in the fellowship hall throughout the year. Several times a year the Red Cross uses the hall for blood drives. Several church activities take place each year. Various community organizations have used this space for meetings and events.

Many individuals have requested to use the fellowship hall for a variety of educational and social gatherings. Requests are submitted on a form which outlines the guidelines for use and first-time users are asked to take a tour before their activity. As the frequency of use has increased, the expectation that those who use the building will clean up after their activity, is important so that the building will be in good condition for the next activity.

## Worship Matters

Thank you to everyone who participated in leading a part of our worship in this season of Lent. Having different voices draw us up into worship of God is a gift.



## Middleburgh Ecumenical Food Pantry

- Russ Ryan

We continue to operate out of the Reformed Church building. Although housed at our Church it is supported by local churches. Clients continue to come for help, and the volunteers are there to help. Numbers vary from months to month as the needs of clients also vary.

The Food Pantry is in need of three things:

- 1) Volunteers: needed to help at the Food Pantry, especially when an order needs to be picked up.
- 2) Donations: non-perishable food items are used to help restock the shelves.
- 3) Finally, monetary donations are needed to help pay for food orders.

The Food Pantry continues to be there for anyone in need.

Open: Saturdays, 9-11 a.m. and by appointment

(518) 827-7121

## Upcoming Events

July  
25th

### Ice Cream Social at the Community Band Concert

The Friday Summer Band concerts during July perform on the Middleburgh High School. Each of the 4 churches in the village take a turn, and 7/25 is our turn.

July  
28th

### Community Worship on the Lawn, 1 p.m.

Join other churches for a worship service and new this year: a picnic! on the MCS lawn

August  
4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>

### Day Camp, 8:30 a.m.- 12 p.m.

Sept.  
20th

### Harvest Bazaar

***If you'd like to update your mailing information, how you receive this newsletter, or to be added to the list, please email: [hello@middleburghreformed.org](mailto:hello@middleburghreformed.org)***

You can also sign up for weekly emails that include announcements along with prayer requests. Sign up for weekly updates: <https://middleburghreformed.org>

New Boilers



Old Boilers (2 of 4 are shown here)



## Boiler Replacement Complete!

A couple years ago, each of the four boilers that heated our space started to need attention. The cost of yearly maintenance spiked to over \$5,000 and parts became obsolete. It was time for replacement. We jumped in not knowing how, or when, it would all work out. It was just a year ago that we had a flurry of events and fundraising efforts. Many pitched in and many more generously contributed, and we even had some fun along the way. We're happy to report that a few weeks ago the 4 boilers were replaced with 2 new shiny ones. We also replaced the stand-by water heater with a basic electric tank style to reduce our stand-by electricity use.

Even though the equipment is tucked away, it's a key piece of the church having a space for our mission. The new setup will also save us propane and electricity due to increased efficiency.

The final cost of the project was \$48,430. We raised \$31,000 and withdrew \$17,430 from our invested savings. Thank you to all who were worked hard putting together the events and those who contributed! We also thank the Lord that it all came together and it was a success!

## Church on Purpose Meetings

- Pastor Jeff Kelley

Over the past several months we've gathered after worship for lunch and conversation. While always a good thing to do, there have been a series of circumstances and new challenges that are worth slowing down and noticing. First, the RCA is going through a tremendous amount of change quickly. While it can seem like just administrative, the changes reflect deeper shifts in our culture- both within and outside the church. We are also talking about shifts in people's routines, especially on Sunday mornings. There is loss and changes and new ways that we are being asked to be faithful. We also recognize God's faithfulness and leading- so want to respond with a 'Yes'! We started by asking questions: where do we see God working? Where has God met us as a community? What do we still value deeply? The intent has been to discern God's leading and ask: *what is God calling us to?*

These are questions of wisdom and discernment, not right or wrong. Right/wrong is much easier! But this is the life of faith and are designed to understand life looking backward but must live it forward. As we've seen God's faithfulness only in the past, we are working to understand our present in light of the Hope we have in Christ. We've been encouraged and edified and look forward to continuing together. All are welcome and we plan to meet again May 18<sup>th</sup> following worship, and of course while sharing lunch.



## Mission Support

- by Leslie Hooper

The Middleburgh Reformed Church has been present in Middleburgh for almost 300 years. This faithful congregation has had a mission to support God's work here in our community and in places beyond.

For over 20 years, our church family has supported Operation Christmas Child. In 2024, we packed over 300 shoeboxes for children with hope that the love of Jesus would be shared around the world. Throughout the year, gifts were made or purchased to fill a box, and money was donated for shipping costs. The congregation helped with various aspects of the mission and stories were shared of how some of these boxes had impacted the lives of children in other countries.

For many years, we've also provided financial support for Reformed Church in America missionaries in Peru and Oman. In October, the congregation was asked to send their personal donations to support Sandy and Albino Rodriguez in Peru where they live with their three children. Their mission, La Casa del Maestro, works to assist indigenous youth in Cusco with vocational training and disciple these youth in the word of God. For more information [www.rca.org/rodriguez](http://www.rca.org/rodriguez).

In November, we highlighted the work of the Bode family: Josh, Erica and their three children, in their mission to offer Christians in Oman a spiritual home. While Oman is a Muslim majority nation, part of the Bode mission is to build bridges and bear witness to what the Holy Spirit is doing in the global church. For more information [www.rca.org/bode](http://www.rca.org/bode).

In December, we heard from Amber Johns to share a message about the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. She told of an exciting way the love of sports can be used to share the love of Jesus. There are several events held locally where athletes and coaches work together to share the gospel. [www.nyfca.org](http://www.nyfca.org)

Thank you to all who made contributions to these missions in October, November and December.

## Harvest Bazaar

- Lara Kelley

First, I want to thank Mary Lou Ryan for the talent, energy and thoughtfulness she has put into the Harvest Bazaar the last several years. She has built this event from scratch, and it has become something the community looks forward to every year. As we work out what the Harvest Bazaar is going to become in the future, it's clear we need to work together for it to be successful.

The date for this year's Harvest Bazaar is **September 20th**. My hope is to continue hosting an event for the community where local vendors, artists and makers are gathered while promoting outside mission work-like the RCA missionaries we have been supporting along with local work.

Here's how you can help:

- Would you like to organize a basket raffle?
- Would you like to run or contribute to the Harvest Cafe?
- Do you know of a local artist or vendor you can invite to participate?
- Would you like to volunteer the day of the event?
- Would you like to set up a display and/or chat with folks about the Rodriguez or Bode family (missionaries who we have supported in the past)?

If you answered yes to any of those questions thank you and please let me know so we can coordinate

([larakelley@gmail.com](mailto:larakelley@gmail.com)).

If you know of another way you might want to help please feel free to reach out. I'll be scheduling a planning meeting soon (hopefully end of April/early May) and I'd love to have as many folks on board as possible. Let's celebrate the bounty of the harvest together! (insert jazz hands here)

## Change in the Lord's Supper

- Pastor Jeff Kelley

*This is a shortened version of the full write-up that can be found online:*

<https://middleburghreformed.org/chang-in-the-lords-supper-full-article/>

Given the title here, you might be nervous. *What are they changing now? Why mess with my childhood memory? Is this a new understanding unlocked through the latest scholarship of endo-scans of an ancient manuscript and divided by the divine numbers as see on Nat-Geo™?* Nope. These are the same promises Christ made to us on the night before he went to the cross. The change is *how* we participate.

But why? The short answer: to help us all to more fully understand the meaning of the Supper. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the protestors opposed the Church's veneration of the sacrament. For them, even kneeling at an altar rail before a casket (the wooden box) was too close to the misunderstandings of the Roman bishop. But how can the practice reflect the understanding?

John Calvin, on the other hand, insisted that Christ is made present by the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a particular means of grace. Christ is neither the bread itself nor constrained to heaven while we sit to recall. Rather, in the Godhead, heaven and earth are joined by Christ's body and made present to us by the Holy Spirit. So, Calvin liked to walk to the table (they called it walking communion). Others set up chairs around a table and sat like a normal meal. Usually, space constraints of buildings make walking communion became the most common practice for Reformed churches, including in the Netherlands. That is until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We believe the Lord's Supper was given to us by Christ as a sacrament to confirm our union with him. It's a sign that proclaims the promise of God to forgive our sins because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Nothing can be added to Christ's work, and we can't do anything to earn it, even faith the size of a pumpkin or smart right thinking doesn't make it more effective. Rather, we come to the table because it ushers us into a new world of God's new creation, like being issued a new passport so we can cross into the new land. That new life in us is a beachhead of New Creation. When we break the bread and drink the cup we participate in Christ's body, on earth as it is in heaven. Since we meet the Triune God as a community in community. We need to resist the material-world denying spirituality that passes as faith. We also need to resist the hyper-individualism fueled by our wealth and rugged independence. The Supper is not a private act of a lone individual's journey to God. So, let's not make it one. Denying these external realities impinges on us in unhelpful ways. And just maybe through a renewed practice the Church (universal) has a chance to rehome the



many homeless Christians wandering about, many of whom are spiritually drug-addled and just need someone to walk them home.

What started with plastic cups ended wondering about the understanding of our practice. The Worship Committee and Consistory worked out a new way to try. And if you've been here for it, you couldn't miss it. In March we started coming forward to the table to receive the bread and the cup. Then we circled around (something of a half-circle) and ate and drank together. The intent of the change is to act more clearly by the truth of the Supper. We didn't change to chase experience but to meet and honor and the Lord as he's honored and met us: *in the body of Christ*. We'll try this for another couple months and talk some more. But notice how this change is helpful to your understanding and participation the sacrament. Also notice ways that it's distracting or disruptive. Maybe it's a bit of both. Either way, I welcome you to share with myself or a member of Consistory or Worship Committee how this helps you to know the Lord better, or better: to be known by God. May the Lord meet us at His Table.

**Consistory**

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Deacons: Michele Becker, Bob Spencer

Pastor: Rev. Jeff Kelley (518) 860-7404 (cell), [jeffa.kelley@gmail.com](mailto:jeffa.kelley@gmail.com)

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