



THE KERK

St. John's Reformed Church, 126 Old Post Road North, Upper Red Hook, New York 12571

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JANUARY 2025

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Minister's Musings

As we carry on into the New Year, we remember the Christmas season. On Christmas Eve, we celebrate a moment when God's vast love broke into our world through the birth of Christ, changing the course of history and how we understand our place within it, much like a thread weaving through the fabric of time. God's love is not a distant concept but a deeply personal reality tailored to each of us. As our faces warm against the gentle glow of Advent candles, our hearts turn to a profound truth illuminated by the story of God made flesh, of hope coming down and calling us by name. The infinite God who orchestrated the cosmos, who set each star in the sky, is the same God who crafted the uniqueness of each of us—from the swirls of our fingerprints to the dreams nestled deep within our souls.

This poem was written by Rev. Sarah Speed and it felt pertinent to share with you Christmas Eve, and I'll share it again here. She writes,

“My grandmother was strong. That’s what they tell me. She played piano and clipped coupons. She raised four kids. One was sick. One never would, never could grow up. But she loved them all. And when life fell apart in brand new ways, she bought books. She went back to school. She started over again. She was the kind of strong that reminds you of a live oak. The kind of woman, the kind of tree, you’d want to crawl up into and whisper, “Tell me how you did it. Tell me how you survived the storm.” She was fifty-one when a vessel in her brain burst, blood coloring outside the lines, blood stealing large swathes of her strength with every pulse. After that, she never did play piano, read, or clip coupons. After that, she never could find the words. Nouns became things to point out. Names became numbers. Conversation creaked and slowed, but one word stayed. The name of my baptism never crossed her lips, but when my grandmother saw me, she’d say—Heeeeey Love. My grandmother and God have this in common. Both know my name. Both call me Love.”

God was with the shepherds and the Magi then and is with us now. What a marvelous reality—love made a way to be near us when there was no way. In Jesus, love has a name. As candles flicker and carols are sung, hold close to the truth that love knows your name.

Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier
Minister of Word and Sacrament

Faith & Education



Bible Study

Bible Study will resume on January 8 at 10:15 a.m. after the holidays. Copies of the 2025 reading guide for the Revised Common Lectionary will be available on the table in the fellowship hall. Newcomers are all welcome to join this Wednesday morning study. You need not read the scripture passages in advance. The study closes with prayer each week



Children's Program

Thank you to the children/youth who participated in retelling the Nativity. It was meaningful. The children will celebrate Epiphany on January 5, recognizing the gifts of the Magi presented to young Jesus.

Resources have already begun to arrive for Lent which begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5. This means Sunday, March 2 will be pretzel-making day!



Book Club

Book Club met December 16 to discuss, "In the Time of the Butterflies" by Julia Alvarez. The next selection is "Lessons in Chemistry" by Bonnie Garmus. The next meeting is January 13, (snow date Jan. 20) at 10 a.m. Book suggestions for 2025 are welcome. Anyone who has read the book or listened to it is welcome to join in the discussions



St. John's Monthly Prayer Service meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m., in the sanctuary. The next monthly prayer service is January 7. Prayers are offered for St. John's missions, for the local community, for those on the prayer list, for those who are unable to gather with the congregation for worship, for personal prayers, and for anyone in need of God's love. For more information, please see *James Walrath*.



Blooming in Faith Women's Fellowship meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the fellowship hall. The next meeting is January 8, at 7 p.m. We gather for fellowship and to create art. For more information, please see *Elizabeth Young*.



Scudder Circle

Eleven members of the Scudder Circle gathered together for our December luncheon at CJ's Restaurant for a time of food and fellowship. Thanks to the generosity of those present we collected \$150 in offering which was used to support the Angel Tree Gift program of Prison Fellowship.

We remain grateful to the members of St John's for their support of our fund-raising efforts. Our recent sales of jewelry at the Christmas Bazaar brought in \$535.65. Your support of our soup and bread sales earlier this year totaled \$1,196. With your support we have been able to donate a total of \$875 to various Missions of the Month and \$600 to our Deacon's Food Pantry. We also provided \$700 in monetary support to our Missionary families: the Bodes, the Horvats and JJ TenClay. In addition we made donations of \$150 each to Love Beyond Walls,

the Hudson River Housing and Prison Fellowship. We also sponsored collection of NEW underwear for distribution to people of need in Haiti. Members support the Scudder Circle through offerings and donations at our monthly meetings. This year that support totaled \$962. Finally, your usage of the link on St John's website to make purchases of RADA Cutlery brought in \$57.60 in 2024.

Soup sales will begin after worship service on Sunday, January 5th. Bev Kipp has again offered to make bread to be sold with our soups and we are so grateful for her commitment. We know how popular her breads are! If you enjoy making soup and would like to donate some to sell please speak to Mary Bayer about this and she will see that you have containers for the soup.

The next meeting on the Scudder Circle will be on Thursday, February 6th at 1:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall. We meet each month February through June and September through December. We are open to all women who are associated with St John's Reformed Church. If you have an idea for a program of interest or if you might be willing to present a program to our group please speak to Desiree Albizu or Mary Bayer. We welcome your ideas!



Mission and Outreach

January MOM Heifer International-Give the Gift of Bees

This month we are supporting the bees! A Heifer honeybee donation includes bees, a hive box and training in beekeeping techniques. Bees work hard for struggling families and are important for the environment. They pollinate forage plants for livestock, flowering plants and food crops. Bees also spread pollen and nectar which can help improve soil microbial activity and nutrient cycling, helping to make soil healthier and more fertile. Bees help seed production by cross pollination.

Along with helping the environment, bees boost income of families through the sales of honey, wax and pollen. Bees help the growth of the family's crops through pollination. Healthy beehives can double the fruit and vegetable yields of small farms. The gift of bees can provide good nutrition, steady and dependable income, increased crop yields, and supply money for school fees and supplies. The families learn a new skill and they are obligated to pass on the gift to others in their community by sharing the bees (and the skills needed) as the bees increase in numbers.

Let's see how many beehives we can give to help families increase their incomes and improve their lives. A donation of \$30 sends one beehive and bees on their mission. Join Us!

Mission & Outreach Team



Streaming Sunday Services:

To access the Sunday Service, go to our website (www.stjohnsreformed.org) and click on the YouTube Live icon. Thank you to Mike Fleming for volunteering to help with steaming of the services. Thank you to our amazing technology team!



PROPERTY COMMITTEE – JANUARY 2025 – A BRAND-NEW YEAR

Happy New Year to you, the congregation of this beautiful church, from the Property Committee. We've gone through the season of Advent, celebrated Christmas and are at the beginning of a brand-new year.

The two major tasks that most of you are familiar with and that were mentioned in the December Kerk, are the replacement of the over 35-year-old fuel oil tanks under the sanctuary and the repair of the fire damage in the parsonage. Property and Finance committees have been meeting and preparing to get these two items completed.

After two unavoidable delays, the fuel tanks are scheduled to be replaced on January 7th and 8th. Perhaps by the time you read this issue of the Kerk, the oil company will have already completed this project.

The fire repair and rehabilitation to the parsonage is a multi-step process and must be done in a specific order. We have received funds from the insurance company. The next step is a required asbestos abatement followed by a thorough cleaning of the house. Then the building contractor can come in and do the actual repairs. Please keep these major items in your prayers in the coming weeks and months.

The parking lot has only needed to be plowed once and the volunteer shovelers have had an easy time of it so far. Surely there will be more snow in the near future. Member of this committee are always willing to pitch in to do other tasks as they pop up. We meet the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00. if you would like to join us, just pop in at a meeting and surprise us!

Happy New Year and God Bless you from Property !!



Our sympathy and condolences are extended to the families and friends of
*Donald Bartles, Alfred G. "Fred" Bier, Pauline Czajka,
Annie Godesky, Debbie Loucks, and Dr. Edwin McLeod "Dick" Meek Jr.,*
upon their recent passing.
May Those Who are Mourning Find Comfort.



*"To my St. John's Family,
Dave, Marilyn, and I can't thank you all enough for all you have done for us during our time of great sadness over the loss of our beloved Fred. All of your expressions of sympathy, kind words, and cards have been a comfort.*

We'd also like to thank everyone who attended Fred's memorial service, baked desserts, set up and cleaned up before and after the luncheon. We couldn't have done all this without your help. It sure helped to make everything easier for us that day.

*We are truly grateful for everyone at St. John's.
Dave Bier, Marilyn Bolz, and Jane Bier*



Door wreaths are in loving memory of Donald Harrison



Poinsettias are given in memory of:

***Beverly A. Campisi, John R. Campisi, Arthur L.
and Margherita Fenaroli***, by Pete, Jackie, and Family

Margaret and Sherman Leach, Nancy and Joseph Jozefowicz,
by Jim, Stephanie, and Abigail Jozefowicz

Fred Bier, Alfred "Fred" Bier, Charles Bolz, and our parents,
by Jane Bier

***Myra Barclay King, Kirsten F. Hogan, Kerry Ann Hawver,
Ishmael Thomas***, by Clifford B. King

Charlie Harrison, by Irene and Rick Harrison

Clifford & Mildred Doyle, Edward & Barbara Leadbitter,
by Denis and Judy Doyle and family

***My grandfather Bennard, my grandmother Mary,
great grandparents Jacehanie and Agathe, aunts and uncles,
in dedication of all innocent lives wasted in various wars
around the world*** by Sheila and Brian Motondi

Betty Jean & Ivan G. Moore, Quentin R., Helen & Robert Q. Moore,
by Barbara E. Dedrick

Gloria and Frank Feldhusen by Roy Feldhusen

Margaret and Albert Trezza, Viola and Adlore Smith,
by Albert and Gloria Trezza

George and Edith Michael, Stella Prairie, by Hop and Cathy Michael

***Family and friends who have gone before us. You are always in our hearts.
In dedication to all who come to worship as we celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus,***
by Steve and Vickie Young

Fresh Flowers in the Church Sanctuary

The vibrant red poinsettias from Christmas will be gone soon. How nice the sanctuary looks when we have lovely arrangements to focus on to enhance worship! If anyone would like to place fresh flowers in church, there are a few easy ways to do it!

1. Purchase flowers, or
2. Cut flowers from your garden, or
3. Send the church office a donation.

Vases are available in the kitchen cabinets to the left of the refrigerator.

Flowers can be arranged in a single vase; however, double vases are best for communion Sundays. Flowers need to be in place by 9:45 a.m. If you want a dedication in that Sunday's bulletin, please contact the church office at 845-758-1184.

The Worship Committee

Draft Consistory Minutes – December 19, 2024

Present: President - Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier, Vice President - Desiree Albizu
Elders - Glenn Countryman, Elizabeth Young, Terry Laibach
Deacons - Eileen Wambach, Clif King, Pete Fenaroli, Laurie DeCiutiis, Mary Hennessy
Newly appointed Elders and Deacons: Beverly Kipp, Kayla Bell

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 by Pastor Alisha. She opened the meeting with prayer and provided a devotion based on an Advent poem.

Motion made, seconded, and carried (M/S/C) to approve the minutes and meeting agenda.

Pastoral Report: Pastor Alisha reviewed all meetings, administrative tasks, and ministry being undertaken during this past month. **Motion M/S/C to approve Pastoral Report.**

Financial Review: Glenn Countryman reviewed the November Narrative that explains the month's income and expenses. He also asked if there were questions on the Profit and Loss Report. No one had any questions. **Motion M/S/C to approve Financial Review.**

Committee Reports:

Pastor Alisha asked if consistory members had any questions or concerns about committee reports. Committee members highlighted a few items in their reports. See reports for additional information.

Faith and Education:

Desiree reported that this Sunday the children will be role-playing the Nativity.

Fellowship:

Elizabeth thanked everyone who helped with refreshments for Fred Bier's funeral. January's Turkey Dinner is cancelled due to family illness.

Finance:

Glenn stated that there are four finance recommendations. Explanations of the recommendations will be provided during special reports/recommendations in the meeting.

Mission and Outreach: Laurie reported that the Christmas presents are being handed out to the food pantry families. The deacons were grateful that M & O Committee members were available to help distribute gifts. January's MOM is the Heifer International-Honeybees project. More information will be in the next Kerk and in the weekly bulletins.

Property: Glenn reported that the delivery of new oil tanks and the removal of the old oil tanks was postponed. New dates are January 7 & 8. Denis Doyle and Glenn have been working with Guide One, our insurance company, to proceed with the steps to prepare to repair and clean the parsonage following the Oct. 27 fire. It's a slow process and we need to follow the insurance company's guidelines. He mentioned that the finance committee has recommended opening a new checking account for the coverage settlement regarding the parsonage. This would be a separate checking account only for parsonage expenses and incomes. Glenn is in search of additional members to join the property committee.

Worship: Terry mentioned that she has been organizing the Christmas Eve Service by obtaining volunteers to usher, gathering candles, and helping with setting up the poinsettias. A pianist is being hired for Christmas Eve Service since Roy Feldhusen will be singing in the choir in place of Joey Breslau. The choir will be singing 2 anthems and a song during the offertory. Zoe Auerbach and others will be playing string instruments during services once a month as a way to give back to the church for the usage of the church building for her recitals.

Technology: Pete reported that there is a major need for people to learn how to use the technology involved during streaming of the services. There has been one volunteer so far, which the technology team is grateful for. This past Wednesday, there were software issues that prevented the cameras to work correctly, therefore, only audio could be recorded for the funeral.

Motion made, seconded, and carried to approve all committee reports.

Working Recommendations and Special Reports:

FCR#1: When the Nancy Finkel bequest is received the bequest be placed in a short-term CD until such time as the Finance and Investment policies are approved. Once the policies are approved the final disposition of the bequest will be decided by the consistory.

Motion M/S/C to approve FCR#1.

FCR#2: Increase the Endowment fund withdrawal to \$13,750 from the current \$10,000 for 2024. This is the maximum amount allowed and will provide \$9,400 towards the \$11,292 for the oil tank replacement.

Motion M/S/C to approve FCR#2.

FCR#3: A representative from Finance Committee, designated by Finance, is to be represented at each Consistory Meeting. The representative will present the Finance narrative and answer any finance related questions. If the answer is not immediately known, the representative will follow up and provide a response to Consistory via e-mail.

Motion M/S/C to approve FCR#3.

FCR#4: A new checking account at Rhinebeck Bank be opened for the purpose of depositing settlements from Guide One Insurance Company for the purposes of repairing the parsonage including the \$289,976.52 and any additional funds received. Signers of the account to be George Michael (Hop), Glenn Countryman, and Denis Doyle.

Motion M/S/C to approve FCR#4.

Motion M/S/C to approve adjourning the meeting after prayer.

Glenn closed the meeting in prayer.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

The next regular meeting of consistory is January 16, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristi Colburn
Clerk of Consistory



Financial Report

Finance Narrative to Consistory for November 2024:

Month of Nov	Income:	\$26535.04
	Expenses:	\$23647.82
	Net:	\$2887.22
Year to Date	Income	\$268978.42
	Pass Through	\$74438.35
	Net Income	\$194540.07
	Expenses	\$216014.24
	Net	-\$21,474.17

The above November numbers include a stock donation made in November with the check received in early December and M&O checks for the months of August through October, paid in early December. This is the best number we have for the year-to-date deficit.

We have been notified that the church is to receive \$5,808.54 from Nancy Finkel's estate. See motion 1.

A meeting was held with Emily Halstein about accounting changes. The accounting changes will not be completed until at least June 2025. Changes will start in January. The items we label as liabilities will be moved into a new checking or savings account. The Emmaus Road checking account will be closed and the money to be moved into this new "liability" account along with the other items now labeled liabilities. A new line item in this account will be added for the Fellowship money.

The church will pay the utility bills for the house Alsaha is in. We will submit proof of bill and payment to insurance company who will reimburse the church for the expense while Alsaha is displaced from the Parsonage.

A check for \$289,976.52 is coming from Guide One Insurance as a settlement of fire coverage. Cost of estimate is \$98,882.47 for mitigation, repair is \$234,822.58, loss recoverable depreciation of (hold back) of \$41,228.53 and \$2,500 deductible on the policy.

Did You Know?

The St. John's congregational family is a collection of people "**doing the good that's theirs to do**".

Any day of the week, any number of vehicles can be seen in the St. John's parking lot. It's expected on a Sunday morning with the usual busyness:

- Choir members practicing early with the music director/musicians to enhance the morning service.
- Two people welcoming and greeting arrivals.
- The Worship team preparing the sanctuary for the morning service as well as for Communion as scheduled.
- The liturgy reader ready to be an important part of the service.
- The audio-visual equipment will be staffed to provide improved sound for sanctuary

- worshippers and YouTube opportunities for those at home.
- Sunday School instructors and nursery helpers will be ready to welcome our young ones.
 - Mission and Outreach committee members will meet to research and direct our missions' initiative.
 - The Fellowship Hour will be faithfully staffed by the Fellowship team.

But what's going on the other days?

- Volunteers mow & weed-whack the cemetery/church grounds, or in winter, remove snow as needed on walks, steps and driveways.
 - Church & parsonage foundation plantings are weeded, edged & pruned by volunteers with gardening skills & interest.
 - The food pantry personnel serve the constant stream of clients.
 - There is a team of counters processing & depositing the weekly offerings.
 - The AV volunteers regularly up-grade and maintain the equipment.
 - John & Karen Roberts lead Bible Study on Wednesday mornings.
 - Scudder and Arts & Crafts members work to support a variety of programs/missions.
 - The Property Committee members deal with building repairs, painting, tree maintenance, monument restorations, stone wall repairs and pest control, just to name a few.
 - There are likely other volunteer efforts that have been inadvertently omitted.
- Quite simply, the vehicles belong to St. John's Church family members, giving their time and talents to support and maintain the facilities, ministries and missions of their church. Clearly the most important asset of St. John's is the Congregation.

Thank you for your 2024 gifts of all types. Collectively it represents the efforts of this Congregation to carry out God's Mission. Merry Christmas.

The Finance Committee



Deadline for the February Kerk is January 24

Personal ads of no more than 3 lines will be accepted for \$1 per issue. Business ads in the form of a business card to be photocopied will cost \$5 per issue. If you would like to receive the Kerk by e-mail (a little more reliably on time than the paper version being mailed to your home) e-mail the church and let us know; office@stjohnsreformed.org.

Calendar

Worship Service

Sundays **10 a.m. in person** and join us on YouTube Live.

Access our website, (www.stjohnsreformed.org), scroll down on the page and click on YouTube Live icon. You can continue to access the weekly bulletins by clicking on the dropdown box "worship service" and select bulletins. Each Sunday's bulletin and announcement page are posted.

Children's Ministry Program Sundays at 10 a.m.

Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs. (off site), Fri.-Sabbath Day

Kristi Colburn, Administrator Mon., Wed., Fri., 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Tues. & Thurs. 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Michele Zagorski, Financial Consultant working remotely

Food Pantry Distribution Mon. 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wed. 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Bible Study Wednesday at 10:15 a.m. in the fellowship hall

DECEMBER EVENTS/MEETINGS:

New Year's Day, Wednesday, January 1, Deacon's Fund Food Pantry and Church Office are closed.

Men's Breakfast Saturday, January 4, 8 a.m. location to be determined

Finance Committee Meeting Monday, January 6, 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall

Monthly Prayer Service Tuesday, January 7, 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary

Blooming in Faith - Women's Group Wednesday, January 8, 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall

Scudder Circle Meeting no meeting in January

Old Dutch Village Garden Club Thursday, January 9, at 12:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall

Book Club. January 13, (snow date Jan. 20), at 10 a.m., reviewing "Lessons in Chemistry" by Bonnie Garmus.

Property Meeting Tuesday, January 14, 7 p.m., in the fellowship hall

Elders Meeting Thursday, January 16, 7 p.m. in Room 3

Consistory Meeting Thursday, January 16, 7:30 p.m., in the fellowship hall

Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 20, Deacon's Fund Food Pantry & Church Office are closed.

Boy Scout Leader's Meeting, Thursday, January 30, at 7 p.m., in room



Shepherds Page

JANUARY 2025

FAITH

I recently saw a wall hanging called "Faith". It did not list an author. The more I read it, the more it helped me to focus better on my faith and the hopes that I could use these as a guideline for improving myself. This wall hanging had a wooden background {like the wood grain that Jesus was nailed to} and the words were written within the shape of the cross. For this article I had wished I could have duplicated the look of the wall hanging for the full effect. So, I am hoping you will also get inspiration from these words too.

*"Live by faith, grow in grace and walk in love.
Focus on the good and amazing things will happen.
Live more, worry less.*

*The one who falls and gets up is so much stronger than the one who never fell.
Accept what is, let go of what was, and have Faith in what will be.
Never stop looking up.*

*Sometimes things fall apart so that better things can fall together.
Always pray to have eyes that see the best in people, a heart that forgives the worst, a mind that forgets the bad, and a soul that never loses faith in God."*

Hopefully, some of the above may give you comfort and strength in your faiths journey too. May we always try to live in faith, go in faith, grow our faith, and practice our faith. Remember with love and faith, as well as God's grace, ALL IS POSSIBLE.

Respectfully submitted,
JoAnn Fisher-Shepherd

Wishing Many Blessing of Love, Peace, and Hope for All
Eileen Zeliph -Shepherd Coordinator

Shepherds Ministry serving St. Johns Reformed Church

**Desiree Albizu
Mary Hennessy
Terry Laibach**

**Kayla Bell
Linda Neilson**

**JoAnn Fisher
Amie Parker**

**Denise Gilhooly
Marie Votava**