



# First Reformed Church of Nyack

Nyack's Hometown Church  
Celebrating 176 years of  
service

Autumn 2014

## Pastoral Reflections

### From Confidence to Humility

Today's passage often gives rise to the athletic language of "running the race," "finishing strong," and other muscular images. Paul even begins by presenting his impressive religious resume justifying his credentials: "If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh I have more," he says.

Of course, he is saying all of this "tongue in cheek." He is setting up the reader for a "bait and switch." I am painfully reminded of the times, in my zealotry, when it was important for me to develop and present my religious credentials. Demonstrate how much I've accomplished. "Look at all the checkmarks on my spiritual ladder!"

John Climacus was a 7<sup>th</sup> century Christian monk who lived in Egypt. He wrote the classic Christian work, "The Ladder of Divine Ascent." It was originally written to monks. But it eventually became standard reading for Christians. It was especially popular for those who lived in the East.

The book became even more famous with an icon which shows a ladder extending from earth to heaven. There are 30 steps to the ladder – reflecting the 30 years of Christ – and one for each chapter of the book which focuses on an ascetic practice.

And just as Paul explains in today's passage, written hundreds of years prior to *The Ladder*, the practices are not about pride in one's spiritual resume; rather, it's about the recognition of our brokenness, our sinfulness, our woundedness, and the humble and hard work of deepening, nurturing and living the Christian life.

We certainly want to nurture a healthy spiritual self-esteem. This is vitally important. But today's reading invites us to nurture this not by addition, but by subtraction. John Climacus uses words like renunciation, detachment, exile, repentance, and mourning. Listen to his words in the Step 7 entitled "On mourning which causes joy."

*Mourning, according to God, is sadness of soul, and the disposition of a sorrowing heart, which ever madly seeks that for which it thirsts; and when it fails in its quest, it painfully pursues it, and follows in its wake grievously lamenting. Or thus: mourning is a golden spur in a soul which is stripped of all attachment and of all ties, fixed by holy sorrow to watch over the heart.*

*Continued on page 2*





## Pastoral Reflections cont'

This language reflects the spirit of Eastern spirituality. It uses “negative” language to reflect a positive reality. “The sadness of the soul.” “A Sorrowing heart.” “Mourning is a golden spur.”

We often hear this language and judge it as a bad or negative thing. But John Climacus uses it as the reality of an evolving spirituality.

John Climacus and Paul help us to understand that what is significant in the soul is not the resume of great accomplishments in our lives, but the brokenness and humility of our hearts. This is something we can do as a community of faith – we can share in each other’s sufferings. This is something we all have in common. This is something that Jesus experienced.

*Sermon Reflections by Pastor Fred Arzola from October 5, 2014.*

## An Update from Soup Angels



We are approaching our ninth annual “Come to the Table” Thanksgiving Feast, held again this year in the Pitkin Room at First Reformed Church on Wednesday, November 26th. While the essentials of the dinner have remained the same—turkey and all the trimmings, vegetables, potatoes, corn bread, pumpkin pies, the number of packaged meals we send throughout Rockland County has risen exponentially.

This year we were asked for 500 meals beyond those we were able to distribute last year—bringing the expected total to around 2700. The logistics involve *A World of Food Caterers* preparing the meals for us and individually packaging them. They are then placed in boxes labeled for the various agencies to come and pick them up at Living Christ church, with the assistance of some of wonderful volunteers from Sunday Supper.

The Soup Angels Feast begins at 4pm, with several hours of prep and decorat-

ing taking place before that time. We have in general served approximately 200 turkey dinners at the church each year— that number has stayed fairly steady.

Please feel free to drop by and see the Pitkin room beautifully decorated and the good cheer that pervades throughout the day. Then we are on to the holidays and a meal on Christmas Eve and New Year's eve this year.

Thank you to our wonderful partners at FRC who provide the hospitality and constant support to Soup Angels. At this giving time of year, we are very grateful for giving a real home to Soup Angels.

—Kathie Rife and Katie Berry for Soup Angels





## Terri's Thoughts

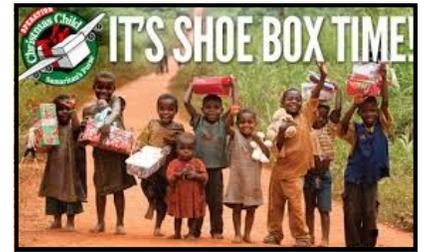
By Terri Wanamaker

Happy Fall everyone! As usual I put this article off for the very last possible minute; and now I find myself trying to get a number of things done all at once! Erica just emailed me and has asked me to proofread her personal statement as she applies to grad school; in addition I am staring at the pile of Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes; staring at this screen as I try to think of something to write; staring at chapter 7 of 'Bod 4 God' Bible study for tomorrow at Bonnie's that I haven't started yet; and glaring at my dog Sandie who managed to sneak and steal four new Beanie Babies out of the shopping bag that holds my items for the shoeboxes ... I take a deep breath, and happen to glance at the picture on the label for the shoeboxes ... and, well, that brings me right back around to deciding what I can write about: these sweet children all around the world who receive one of these boxes for Christmas. For most of them it is their only present they get. They live in areas ravaged by typhoons, wars, and even in places where Samaritan's Purse cannot



publish the names of their countries because of security reasons. According to an article in "A Samaritan's

Purse Special Report," more than 1.1 million children in 90 countries participate in discipleship lessons, learning how to share their faith with their family and friends. It all begins with a shoebox gift and a Gospel presentation and the knowledge that these boxes are packed with love. The children experience God's unconditional love through these same shoeboxes!



So have fun packing your shoeboxes! Be one of the more than 110,000 volunteers across our great country to collect and process 7.5 million shoebox gifts! Think of the simple joy and delight of the child who gets to open your box and is thrilled with these gifts in Jesus' name: school supplies, colorful socks, gloves, or hair ribbons, crayons, toy cars, toothpaste or soap! Oh! Beanie Babies! ( don't tell Sandie) Barbie dolls! YoYo's! Combs and brushes! Pretty bracelets!

There will be boxes and labels available each Sunday through early November. There is always a shipping charge for each box of \$7.00. That can be included in the box (no cash please) or donations can be made online. If you donate online, you will be able to "follow your box" at [www.samaritanpurse.org](http://www.samaritanpurse.org). Please feel free to ask me any questions...and please pray for the child who will receive your gift. Thank you!

## GIVING

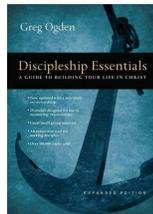


Support First Reformed Church through service, prayer, and/or giving. The church website is now set up for members and friends to make online donations through PayPal: [www.nyackreformed.org/giving](http://www.nyackreformed.org/giving)



## SUNDAY MORNING DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

### OCTOBER



#### ~ Discipleship Essentials ~

Meets in church lounge at 9am

Alan Cann & Bonnie Williams, Group Leaders

## SUNDAY MORNING DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

### NOVEMBER



#### ~ The Book of James ~

Meets in church lounge at 9am

Nina Balmaceda and Asha Paulose, Group Leaders

## FRC Partners With the Nyack Consultation Center this Holiday Season

### Thanksgiving Meal

Again this year, First Reformed Church will be providing a festive and delicious sit-down turkey dinner to the clients and staff of the Nyack Counseling Center, which is housed in our church building. Food will be provided on Wednesday, November 26th by World of Food caterers that are also working with Soup Angels later that day. Volunteer servers will be needed from among our church family as well as providing help with clean up. Please speak to Carol Russell or Kathie Rife if you are able to assist. Help will be needed by 11am and we will be completely done by 2pm.

### Holiday Gifts

It is not too early to think about buying a small gift or two for a client of the Nyack Counseling Center at FRC. This year we will again be providing "white" gifts for men and women. Such items as the following would be welcome (or use your creativity!):

- pair of gloves (man or woman)
- hat or scarf (man or woman)
- scented soap
- nail care kit
- hair care brush and comb set
- small cosmetics
- hand lotion, face cream
- small chocolates or other holiday treats (pre-packaged)

Items will be collected in early December (preferably by December 7th) for distribution to the Center clientele before the holidays. Please see Kathie Rife for any questions regarding these gifts.



## Building & Grounds Update—Paul Wanamaker



In the last few months, several projects have been completed at the church and the manse.

The steps leading to the glass door entrance on Burd St. have been repaired. This work was performed by local mason Bob Grando and his crew. They did a beautiful job and now the steps are safe and secure once again. They repaired the Church St. glass door entrance last year also.

The walkway leading to the manse front door was also repaired. This job was done by Skip and Carol's son-in-law Mark Biffert. This walkway was in serious disrepair and Mark meticulously re-grouted each piece of grey slate back into place restoring this entrance way to it's original beauty.

Many thanks to Mark for doing such an outstanding job for us!

Last month we got a closer look at the cracked and sagging brickwork on the west Pitkin wall. Skip snapped a photo and showed it to the mason, Bob Grando. In the very near future Bob will take a closer look to determine how serious the problem is and we will go from there.

Skip and Al Wolf, our "on call" contractor, continue to work on maintenance issues throughout the

buildings; from loose/missing tiles in the clinic and ladies bathroom, to fences at the manse. Having a very busy soup kitchen two days per week, as well as many other groups using our facilities, requires a lot of ongoing attention to many details. Having Skip and Al available to us keeps things running smooth for all of these groups as well as our congregation.

Thanks to both of you!

Thanks to Karen & Henry Kennell for donating and maintaining the Alberta Spruce trees and the additional seasonal plants in the front of the church! We appreciate their generosity and willingness to beautify the front entrance to our church.

A couple of months ago, Skip and I spent some time with a representative from the Verdin clock company. We discussed the possibilities of restoring our clock as well as our bells. The good news is that it is all possible! But, it will not be inexpensive. We did not receive an estimate as we thought we would, so we will follow-up and pass on the details when we get them.

There are other projects waiting to be addressed and we will continue to update you in the future. As always, if you see anything that needs attention or have any ideas, let me or Skip know. Have a great fall.

## Sunday Coffee Hour Schedule

**October 19:** Cindy Graham

**October 26:** Jill Johnson

**November 6:** Confirmation Sunday

**November 9:** Available

**November 16:** The Travers

**November 23:** Available

**November 30:** The Wanamakers



If you would like to help out by being a Sunday reader/coffee hour refreshment provider, please contact Terri Wanamaker: [pomsmom247@yahoo.com](mailto:pomsmom247@yahoo.com) or 845-353-1986.



## SUNDAY SCHOOL

By Bonnie Williams, Sunday School Coordinator

During the third week of August 23 young people participated in Vacation Bible School from 5:30-8pm, Monday through Friday. Children attended from First Reformed Church Sunday School, First Haitian Church and House of Prayer and several youngsters came from other churches. High Schoolers and “tweens” served as Assistant Crew Leaders and Leaders of the three “Weird Animals Crews.” For the VBS service project, attendees, with the help of our congregation, raised funds to provide 8 children in India with clean water for a year.



Our three Confirmands worked very hard setting up scenery in preparation for the young people experiencing Biblical Adventures such as Jesus washing the disciple’s feet, Jesus healing the 10 lepers, and Ananias healing Paul.



Pastor Fred pitched in by inflating water balloons for the outdoor games!

Jill Johnson, Terri Wanamaker, Janet Lee, Mary Ellen Greenberg and Diona and Jim Cameron, Pastor Bastien and Pastor Maria were also a tremendous help in supporting the program.



The Sunday School kicked off the fall program by singing in church. The movie, “The 10 Commandments” is serving as the basis for our curriculum in September and October. The young people have viewed the portions showing baby Moses in the bulrushes and Moses at the burning bush. A portion of the movie will be shown and discussed each week.

### CONFIRMATION SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>

Destiny Bossa, Nadine Cherestal, and Roberto Chia-Balmaceda met regularly in the spring, several times during the summer and are continuing to meet in the fall. They have substantially contributed to the work of the church by serving at Soup Angels, helping with VBS and assisting in teaching Sunday School. Please be sure to join us when they confirm their faith during the November 2<sup>nd</sup> service.

### TEEN MOVIE NIGHT

A date will soon be announced for our teens to gather to view “Heaven is for Real.”

### SEEKING SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADERS

Do you feel called to work with young people? We are seeking leaders who can take turns leading Sunday School classes. Talk to Bonnie Williams if you are interested.



## **CONFIRMATION SUNDAY**

Sunday, November 2 ~ 10:30pm



We celebrate the Confirmation of Roberto A. Chia-Balmaceda, Destiny-Shannen Bossa & Nadine Anne Cherestal.

## **LOVATT CHAPEL REDEDICATION**

Sunday, November 9 ~ 10:30am



The beautifully refurbished Lovatt Chapel will be rededicated on this Sunday morning.

## **HEALING SERVICE**

Sunday, October 19 & Sunday, November 16 ~ 10:30am



A simple healing service component in worship for those who desire prayer, laying of hands, and anointing with oil.

## **Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service**

Tuesday, November 25 ~ 7:30pm



We welcome the Nyack Interfaith Clergy Association and members of our community to this annual interfaith service. Reception to follow in the Pitkin Room.



## Nyack's Hometown Church

### First Reformed Church of Nyack

**Church Location**  
18 South Broadway  
Nyack, NY 10960



**Mailing Address**  
Box 565, Nyack, NY 10960

845 358 5518  
frchurch@optonline.net  
www.nyackreformed.org  
www.facebook.com/groups/frcnyac

**Pastor/Preaching Elder**  
Dr. Fernando Arzola Jr.  
Nyackpastor@gmail.com  
Manse 845 480 5680

**Office Manager/Newsletter Editor**  
Sarah Kotecha

**Music Director**  
James Rensink

**Children's Sunday School Coordinator**  
Bonnie Williams

#### CONSISTORY

##### Elders

Bruce Biavati  
Alan Cann  
Skip Russell  
Chuck Travers (Vice President)

##### Deacons

Katherine Rife (Clerk)  
Paul Wanamaker

*Affiliated with  
The Reformed Church in America*



## Calendar of Upcoming Events: Don't Miss Out!

**Sunday, October 19, 10:30am:** Healing Service.

**Sunday, November 2:** Daylight Savings Time Ends. Don't forget to set your clocks back 1 hour!

**Sunday, November 2, 10:30am:** Confirmation Sunday.

**Sunday, November 9, 10:30am:** Lovatt Chapel Rededication.

**Sunday, November 16, 10:30am:** Healing Service.

**Sunday, November 23, 10:30am:** Guest Preacher, Dr. Elaine Lux.

**Tuesday, November 25, 7:30pm:** Annual Nyack Interfaith Thanksgiving Service in the sanctuary with reception to follow.

### October & November Anniversaries

**November 26:** Harmon & Bonnie Williams celebrate 48 years



### October & November Birthdays

**November 4:** Margie Jennings

**November 12:** Gianna Alessi

**November 30:** Paul Wanamaker

