



First Reformed Church of Nyack

Nyack's Hometown Church
Celebrating 176 years of
service

May/June 2015

Pastoral Reflections

Doubt and Questioning as a Natural Part of Faith

I wish I can tell you life will be easy. That we will have all the answers. That the lights will always be green when we drive. That our favorite team will always win. That we will only experience love and happiness devoid of pain and confusion. But you know this would be foolish. We even teach our children ways to prepare for the hardships of life. So why would we think the spiritual life is any different?

The spiritual and ethical life is as terrifying as it can be awe-inspiring. Doubt and questioning are not signs of a weak faith, but of a maturing person thoughtfully working out his/her spiritual and intellectual muscles. Like a bird hatching out of its egg, we too have to stretch our wings and learn to fly by pressing against that which tries to keep us in the comfortable cocoon of religiosity.

Philippians 2:12 tells us to "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Let us not interpret this as some word of damnation. Rather, let this be a humble and gentle reminder that matters of the heart, the faith, the mind are hard.

Be leery of Pharisees who pass judgment or clichés too quickly. They are not doing the hard work of critical reflection. It is important to see that in today's passage – in the midst doubt and questions and fear – Jesus' presence assures them, "Peace be with you."

It is normal for us to doubt and question. And those are scary moments, filled with anxiety and confusion. It may even feel like mourning the death of a close friend. A friend who like Peter Pan doesn't want to mature, but continues to live a life avoiding the necessary pains and struggles of adulthood and maturity; a friend who holds on to the beliefs of childhood unwilling and too terrified to let go.

But we have to let go, knowing that the spiritual life is deeper, broader, more complicated than the comforts of an oversimplified faith.

Peace be with you.

My invitation to all of us is to somehow – even in the midst of doubt and questioning – to allow peace to enter our hearts. This is part of the wondering and wandering and mystery of the spiritual journey.

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Pastoral Reflections continued...

I can envision Thomas the Apostle, the one popularly known as Doubting Thomas, looking at his own hands and seeing the faith that he held on to so firmly, so surely, so confidently, so solidly became water slipping through his fingers.

Verse 26 states, “A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

It doesn’t say Thomas touched Jesus. We simply hear him stating, “My Lord My God.”

And it was at that moment that he encountered the faith anew. It may have looked the same externally, but it was totally different internally.

For Thomas it was a week of doubt. For others it may be longer. You may be in this season right now. And if you are in this season, be patient and gentle with yourself. I think what we can take out of today’s passage is that God’s spirit meets us where we are at, wherever we might be.

This pastoral reflection was taken from a sermon based on John 20:19-31 and delivered by Fernando Arzola, Jr. on April 12, 2015, Second Sunday of Easter, Year B.

A Note from Our Music Director



I thought that our recent late winter/early spring music activities were very rewarding. The choir sang many new and moving pieces centered around Lent and Easter. We also had wonderful guest artists contribute their artistry to our services. Kathie Rife, Joe Alessi, Arlene Keiser, and Sheryl Staples enhanced our services with inspiring performances.

The season of Lent and Easter avail us of some of the most intimate and rewarding services of the entire year. Our Holy Thursday service was an unforgettable experience—quiet, introspective, and reflective. The Easter sunrise service is always a favorite—joyous, uplifting, and fun. We often are able to connect with old friends from our area who are members of other houses of worship. Easter morning is always a fitting culmination to the season. Again, this service, too, is a chance to worship and celebrate with many old friends. Now we anticipate the true arrival of spring and the beautiful music that accompanies it. As the choir continues to grow, I look forward to great community and music-making!

Best, Jim

Buildings & Grounds Update—Paul Wanamaker

It's been a very busy time at the church. We have hosted many events including performances by Tom Chapin and Sir James Galway and his wife Lady Jeanne Galway. The church was full (around 300 people!), including several from our congregation, to hear the magnificent music from these world renowned flautists. Both concerts were benefits that were produced by ArtsRock.

We also hosted three birthday parties and a baby shower, all in the Pitkin room.

On Saturday, April 18, we had a clean-up day. A large container supplied by Nyack DPW was filled to capacity as we cleaned out all the old and unneeded items from the basement. The labor was provided by several members of our church as well as members of House of Prayer and First Haitian Church. Three Nyack College students supplied the needed muscle to remove some of

the larger items. Carol Russell organized all the cabinets and Terri, Carol McIntosh and Marisol from HOP cleaned out the cupboards under the counter in the Pitkin Room. Barbara and Al polished the woodwork in the sanctuary and Jerry and newcomer Jim worked diligently in the basement alongside Joseph from First Haitian. Chuck was in charge of “what stays and what goes.” Al brought the “Box -O- Joe” to wake everyone up and keep ‘em movin’. Our Pastor served as the “Dumpster Master,” strategically arranging the items so they all fit into the container. Fun was had by all (I think?) and we are once again able to see the floor in the basement. Several projects are in the works for the spring and summer season as we continue to upgrade and beautify our buildings.

—Skip & Paul, Building & Grounds Committee



Soup Angels



Our guests continue to be well fed at our soup kitchen and their numbers have remained steady or increase week to week. About 3 weeks ago there were 85 people for dinner on a Monday night, a new record. While the economy seems to be improving, according to reports, this uptick has not yet been reflected among the guests at Soup Angels.

Thank you for allowing us to use space right in front of the church for the Nyack Street fairs. Our first fair of the season was on a sunny spring day on April 12th. We collected around \$3500 in donations! Our strategy is simply to ask people walking by for a dollar to help feed the hungry. We find most people feel this is affordable. All it takes is a lot of persistence and enough hours so that after thousands of people have strolled by our tent we have filled our soup pots with dollar bills!

Our menus continue to reflect an emphasis on healthy food, well prepared. This week, for example, we had ham and swiss cheese sandwiches on club rolls from Rockland bakery accompanied by a homemade split pea soup. Wednesday will be chicken-fried steak, mashed potatoes, peas and carrots and a fresh salad on the side from a chef trained at the Cordon Bleu school (not kidding!)

As always, we look forward to the day when we will

go out of business because everyone has a job and enough to eat. In the meantime we continue to offer meals that help extend the budget for many and offer an extra lunch besides.

One of our guests is in his late 70's and used to work for an advertising company. He seems to be in good health and I have sometimes wondered why he comes to Soup Angels. The last time I saw him he said that Soup Angels is "food from heaven." We are not that wonderful of cooks! What it seems to offer him mostly is a good meal and people who know him and care about him, who ask him how he is and take the time to listen to his response. As time has gone on the volunteers seem to understand their vital role ever more clearly.

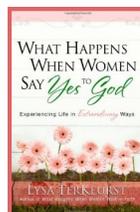
Our latest quest is to work with Paul Wanamaker and Sarah Kotecha to get new chairs for the Pitkin room; chairs that are lighter and stack easily and will hopefully last a long time. They may be a little quieter when being folded up too!

We wish to thank Paul and Skip Russell for their tireless efforts to help our kitchen function on a daily basis. Even the small details can make a huge difference to the well-functioning of the whole endeavor.

Kathie Rife and Katie Berry for Soup Angels

~ WEDNESDAY MORNING WOMEN'S GROUP 10AM ~

Meets at David's Bagels (2 Lake Road East, Valley Cottage, NY)



Cindy Graham, Group Leader

845.729.7211 cmg313@verizon.net



SUNDAY SCHOOL—EASTER SEASON

By Bonnie Williams, Sunday School Coordinator

In March, youth from the First Reformed, House of Prayer and 1st Haitian Congregations joined together for pizza and the movie "Heaven is for Real." They will gather soon again for another movie and pizza.



In preparation for Easter, Steve and Ginny Borton, Peter James, Caileigh Travers, Elise Graham, Jayson Leonard, Destiny Bossa and Nadine Cherestal played key roles in presenting JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. The Sunday School students walked through the events of Holy Week: visiting the Upper Room, carrying the cross, thinking about Good Friday, and entering the empty tomb.



The Joy of Easter was celebrated with an Easter Egg Hunt and two weeks later, the Greek custom of Egg Bopping. Chuck Travers and Dylan Lee won the Egg Bopping Championship.

During the last few months, relying on Roberto Chia's skill in managing audio-visual equipment, the Sunday School has been viewing movies about the Old Testament heroes, Joseph, Moses and Joshua.



COMING SOON:

Teen Pizza and Movie Night

Mother's Day, May 10

Children's Day/Father's Day, June 21

Vacation Bible School in August



SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE AT MARYDELL

Sunday, May 17 ~ 10:30am

Sunday, July 12 ~ 10am

Sunday, Sept. 13 ~ 10:30am



Marydell is located at 640 North Midland Ave, Upper Nyack, NY.

Vari Musicisti Orchestra performs classical music
featuring Nyack native Rob Keiser on piano
Saturday, May 30 • 7:30 pm



First Reformed Church of Nyack
Concert to Benefit Soup Angels of Nyack
With a Wine Tasting to Follow

To Purchase Tickets:

\$20 concert \$55 concert & wine tasting

<https://www.facebook.com/varimusicisti>

JULY & AUGUST SUMMER WORSHIP SERVICES

10AM SERVICE TIME



BEGINS JULY 5



Nyack's Hometown Church

First Reformed Church of Nyack

Church Location

18 South Broadway
Nyack, NY 10960

**Mailing Address**

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Office Manager/Newsletter Editor

Sarah Kotecha

Music Director

James Rensink

Children's Sunday School Coordinator

Bonnie Williams

CONSISTORY**Elders**

Skip Russell

Chuck Travers (Vice President)

Deacons

Arlene Keiser

Katherine Rife (Clerk)

Paul Wanamaker

*Affiliated with
The Reformed Church in America*



Calendar of Upcoming Events: Don't Miss Out!

Sunday, May 10, 10:30am: Mother's Day service.

Wednesday, May 13, 9:30am: Women's Wednesday morning small group meets at David's Bagels in Valley Cottage.

Sunday, May 17: Nyack Street Fair.

Sunday, May 17, 10:30am: Worship service at Marydell Faith & Life Center's outdoor chapel.

Monday, May 25: Memorial Day. Church office closed.

Saturday, May 30, 7:30pm: Vari Musicisti Orchestra concert to benefit Soup Angels.

Sunday, June 21, 10:30am: Children's Day/Father's Day worship service followed by church picnic on front lawn.

Sunday, June 28, 10:30am: Honor graduates during the worship service.

Sunday, July 5: Sunday worship service time changes to summer service time, 10am.

May & June Anniversaries

May 12:

Paul & Terri Wanamaker celebrate 25 years

May 28:

Kathie Rife & Joe Alessi celebrate 29 years

May & June Birthdays

May 1: Erica Wanamaker

May 7: Jean Rensink

May 15: Jeff Weishaar

May 17: Terri Wanamaker

Kevin Graham

May 31: Bruce Biavati

June 8: Brian Jennings

