



# First Reformed Church of Nyack

**Nyack's Hometown Church**  
Celebrating 187 years of  
service

Fall 2023

## Pastoral Reflections

It's a new program year, Church Gang! I like calling you that because (1) you are like a gang of buddies, and (2) because we are all out there doing the sneaky gang-like stuff of infiltrating the world's business with the revolutionary love of God. And I am writing this for the whole gang, both Nyack and Piermont congregations.

Here's why. In Nyack, we are working on a transition that will lead to a whole new model of building function and use. Basically, a new nonprofit called The Angel Nyack would assume ownership of and responsibility for the facility, with the church and Soup Angels being among the many entities that would use the building. The coming changes should create a brand new relationship of the facility to the community. In Piermont, we face many of the same challenges that have led First Nyack to embrace these changes, and we would do well to seek a similar solution. In Nyack, it all began with a simple prayer asking God to show us the way. We will pray the same for Piermont now.

I believe the changes in Nyack present a great opportunity to reset, rebrand, and reinvent the church. In both Nyack and Piermont, I arrived to find that our congregations had reputations, no matter how unfair: Stodgy. Exclusive. Upper crust. Old-fashioned bastions of tradition. Privileged. Judgmental and moralizing. You get the idea. Some of these are general critiques of all mainstream Protestants, or even all Christians. That only makes it harder to shake people's view of us.

So in Nyack, we know that even if the financial burdens are lifted, it still won't matter if we don't add members at least as fast as we lose them. We need to reinvent ourselves to take advantage of the opportunity at hand. This all applies to Piermont too—no need to wait.

This is my take: we need to evolve into a spiritual community that reflects the community we serve, in some ways catching up to ideals that outpace our own, bringing to the community's culture the insights and values of Christian faith, and opening pathways for people to find a living relationship with God through Jesus. We need to be evangelical in heart and spirit, eager to share the experience of divine love without limit; at the same time, intellectually honest and respectful of science; as deeply concerned for justice and peace as the prophets; radically inclusive with regard to race, social class, age, gender, ability, etc.; incorporating the arts; welcoming of the gifts and perspectives of all who come, while preserving tradition where it is most worthy. We need to show the world that we are a church that is different—different at least from their negative preconceptions. We must honestly admit and disavow Christianity's past missteps and shortcomings, and commit to becoming everything Jesus said the church could be. We must reshape our worship and service to embody these goals. We can become a gathering where people find personal redemption as well as shared vision for a world made new. "Thy Kingdom come *where* Thy will IS done on earth as it is in heaven, including right here in our hometown."

~Pastor John



## First Reformed Church of Nyack

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Mikki Baloy

**Music Director**  
James Rensink

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

**CONSISTORY  
Elders**  
Jill Lydecker-Lavelle  
Skip Russell (VP)

**Deacons**  
Margaret MacCartney  
(Treasurer)  
Katherine Rife (Clerk)  
Carolyn Travers

*Affiliated with  
The Reformed Church in  
America*



## Sunday School



The Father's Day/Children's Day service in June was a joyful time in which the young people sang and told the story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Our three second grade graduates (Brendan, Angelina and Jordan) were presented with Bibles open to Ephesians 2:10 by their parents and Elder Skip Russell.

We rested in July and resumed meeting in August using the outer space theme "Stellar Vacation Bible School" material. Kids received "Watch for God Wristbands", and in week one thought about "shining Jesus' light when life feels dark", in week two "when friends don't get along" and in week three "when we are joyful." In one session kids loved sending up little rockets and yelling "Thank you Jesus." Two more sessions remain. Although there are lots of scientific gimmicks and silly things to do, it is my prayer that the young people come to know Jesus – not just know about him. I hope they will learn that our purpose is to glorify Him through our achievements and service.



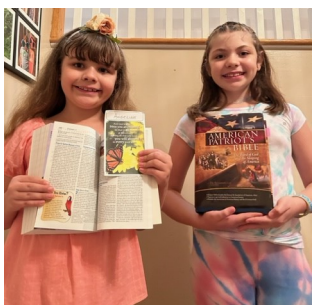
Jazmine, Sky, Alexander and Simon received Patriots Bibles which along with scripture contain many examples of the intersection of American history and the Christian faith up to 2009. Jim Rensink gave me this Bible many years ago and I am embarrassed to say that I really did not look at it much until the last 6 months. I am now using this edition to try to read through the

Bible in a year. I thank God for Jim's gift and pray that young and old in our church will spend time in God's Word everyday – whether in this edition or others. I am giving it to children because I know that they no longer learn anything about how important the Christian faith has been to this nation. Yes, we all have fallen short in many ways, and we need to repent for not putting our love for God and His words to us first, but this nation has been blessed and empowered to stand for good in the world because many have been open to God's leading in the past.

## FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY

The Friday morning group will regroup in September. Because of a number of schedule conflicts we were unable to get together this summer. We will continue in our study of the book of John.

Many thanks to the Congregation for the lovely cross necklace that was given to me on Children's Day! I treasure it!



~Bonnie Williams







## Message from the Treasurer

As the weather begins to change to fall, my favorite time of year, I am sure that there will still be some hot Indian Summer days for all our sun lovers. Although so grateful for the air conditioning in the Pitkin room, I am looking forward to getting back to worshipping in our beautiful sanctuary surrounded by our majestic stain glass windows and the sound of our organ. Thank you to all who have been faithfully giving their offering weekly/monthly to help us keep the bills paid. Also, a reminder that using our church envelopes for your offerings and gifts helps with the book keeping and with giving you the most accurate accounting of your annual giving come tax time. If you need envelopes, please contact me and I will see that you get them. Our blessings are many. Thank you, Lord, for loving us the way you do. We praise you!

*~Margaret MacCartney*

## Calendar

Nyack Street Fairs on September 10 and October 8

## Community News

Hello friends! I've just returned from what may well be a once-in-a-lifetime trip. To celebrate a family anniversary, we cruised from Istanbul to Venice, with a few extra days on either end to explore both endlessly fascinating cities. The cruise offered port excursions in Ephesus, Lesbos, Nafplio (Corinth), Katakolon (Olympia), Durres in Albania, Dubrovnik in Croatia, and the east coast of Italy (Monopoli and Ancona). After our time in Venice, we had a short visit in Padua to see the Scrovegni Chapel and Botanical Gardens. Then Rob and I continued on our own to Ireland for a road trip that ended at a friend's lovely wedding celebration in West Cork. I appreciated Rob's driving skills on the Wild Atlantic Way: stick shift on the wrong side of the car *and* the road! Ireland is stunningly beautiful around every bend, from Dublin to Derry, Donegal to Drimoleague.

It was certainly an adventure, and here are just a few of the 1000+ photos that I took— and will be sorting through and savoring for years to come.

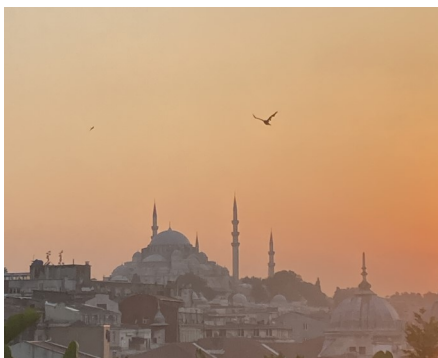
*~Mikki Baloy*



Quintessential Venice



With Rob McMahon at Knowth, Bru na Boinne Ireland



Sunset in Istanbul



A shop in Kruja, Albania