



First Reformed Church of Nyack

Nyack's Hometown Church
Celebrating 186 years of
service

Easter 2023

Pastoral Reflections

A leopard can't change its spots, goes the old saying. People usually quote this with a sigh to resign themselves to the faults or misdeeds of someone around them. Far less often, they will say it of themselves. I'm not sure whether denial in our own cases is good or bad. Someone who knows my foibles might well sigh and say, "He's never going to change." I might say, "Oh, I can change. I just don't want to right now."

Lent has always been a time when Christians have given special emphasis to the possibility of change. After all, "all things are possible with God." That's great, but with a couple problems. One is its limited time span. Whatever we try to change in ourselves between Ash Wednesday and Easter, if we don't accomplish it in that time, or if we just forget it when Lent ends, it's like a weeks-long version of New Year's resolutions. When it's all over, we are spotty leopards again.

And, Lent is too easily reduced to a few traditions: ashes on the forehead, giving up something like chocolate that has nothing to do with remaking our souls, a change or two in the liturgy. And the hymns and anthems get all sad and sulky. They are intended to mourn for the crucified Jesus (as if he never rose) or thank him for getting punished in our place—which is something we can talk about, but sometimes they seem to lock people more firmly in the place where they feel undeserving of love. This, when everything Jesus does in the gospel shows how much God values you. At no other time do some Christians so well fit the old prayer's description, "miserable offenders." We want to cure depression, not turbocharge it.

In Lent, we affirm that change IS possible. Whatever ball-and-chain we tote with us can be removed with simple steps: honest recognition, acceptance, willingness to be changed by grace, and humbly asking God to remove our fault. It works!

Forget leopards and think butterflies. Do you know that in a cocoon caterpillars don't just change shape but dissolve into goo? Only a few special cells remain, which use the goo to build butterfly body parts. Thank you, God, that our own changes don't have to be that radical, but thank you too for showing us how complete our change can be.

So we come to Easter. The butterfly images we are sure to see speak to us not just of Jesus coming from the tomb as if it were a cocoon, but of God's ability to transform who we are, in ways that can only enrich our happiness. Ask God, then for what you need, and Happy Easter!

~Pastor John



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Deacons

Margaret MacCartney
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Katherine Rife
Carolyn Travers
Arlene Keiser (Clerk)

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Sunday School and Bible Study

For Lent the young people have been using a combination of Twist and Turns Vacation Bible School materials based on five accounts of Jesus' ministry and a scratch-off Lenten calendar. The calendar suggests daily activities which help us to serve God, and Twists and Turns uses games and plastic take-home Memory Makers to reinforce the Bible message and help all to experience the joy of knowing Jesus. We have been working on memorizing 2 Bible verses: Psalm 25:4, and John 3:16. We have made prayer boxes which contain references to the verses and activities which help us to think about them.



Take home Bible Memory Makers



Tool for memorizing Bible Verses

On **Palm Sunday, April 2**, we will participate in the Journey to Jerusalem. I'm praying that all ten of the students will be able to come on that day as we pretend to be disciples and follow the events of Jesus last week leading up to Easter.

As Easter approaches, we will again "Journey to Jerusalem" and pretend to follow Jesus' steps during his last week.

On **Easter** we will have family worship with activities for the young people in the service, followed by an Easter Egg Hunt.

The **Sunday after Easter** all are invited to participate in the Egg Bopping challenge during coffee hour which has come to be known as "Bagels and Bopping."



FRIDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

We continue to meet via both zoom and in person from 10-11:30 on Friday mornings. We are focusing on the book of John. Hopefully the Friday before Easter a number of us will work to stuff plastic eggs for the Easter Egg Hunt. We welcome anyone who would like to join us even just for a time or two. God's amazing love can often shine through us when we pray together and share insights we obtain from thinking about God's Word.

~Bonnie Williams





Music

Finally-- a little spring. I know that many of you, my dear church friends, have been up to our house northwest of Monroe NY. So when you've watching the weather/news talking about snow totals being higher n the Catskills and other elevated areas, THAT'S US (our house is at an altitude just under 1000 ft.) Thank heaven Nate is still with us (he calls himself the caretaker to two aging invalids) - he does all the heavy lifting following bad weather, shoveling, salting, cleaning, etc. Really looking for to easier trips come springtime.

As always, everyone is so appreciative of our many musical offerings, and we've had some dandys. Benjamin Baron, clarinetist extraordinaire, shared his talents with us, as did our wonderful friend Sherry Sylar, principal Associate oboe of the New York Phil.

Looking forward, the wonderful, time honored music of Lent and Easter. **CALLING ALL PARTICIPANTS!!** Even if you don't regularly sing with the choir, **I WANT YOU! April 2 at 9am**, please come ready to rend forth, as we will sing a perennial favorite "The Palms." Reading music is not a prerequisite- you all know the tune - it's gonna be great!

And don't forget the Sunrise Service at the Hook, Easter Morning at 7am!

~Jim Rensink

Calendar

April 2 Palm Sunday- Journey to Jerusalem

April 9 Easter Sunrise Service, 7am at Hook Mountain

April 9 Easter

April 16 Egg Bopping & Pot Luck Luncheon

May 14 Mother's Day

We're still in need of coffee hour sign ups, contact Carolyn Travers (camtravers@att.net) if you'd like to help out.



Soup Angels

Please remember **Soup Angels** with some donations of food for an Easter blessing, as well as cereal for the Nyack Center.

Due to the pull back on government support of HYPNAP (formerly referred to as food stamps) starting March 1, Soup Angels participated in a press conference several weeks ago as part of a fundraising effort to face the anticipated 10-20% increase in the numbers of hungry families seeking help from food pantries and soup kitchens. As of now, FRC church is giving us space 4:30- 6:30 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays to offer food pantry items, sit down hot meal dining AND "to go" 250 hot meals in less than 2 hours.

We have begun again to offer table service to our guests using tablecloths, flowers, candles and real china as we did prior to the start of the pandemic. We are very grateful for the church's support and assistance, as always.



Some holiday gift baskets for our Soup Angels children, courtesy of some community members.

~Kathie Rife



Community News



The Souperbowl of Caring luncheon in February was a huge success!! Great food and fellowship and we were serenaded by our own Sky, the very talented violin player.



Bonnie brought Spirit, her fuzzy puppy puppet to speak to Elle and Brenden about how blessed we are to have Pastor John to guide us in our spiritual life. Bonnie let them and the congregation in a prayer thanking God for our loving pastor.



Happy belated birthday, Bonnie Williams!



“Our daughter, Erica, and son in law, Xiduo, had their sweet baby girl Friday, 3/17/23, named Aurora RuiWen Liu. She is a miracle from God, beautiful and tiny with a great set of lungs. New parents are doing ok, the usual sleep deprivation but so loving towards their new arrival. We are all thrilled and blessed. Thank you everyone for all of their prayers throughout Erica’s pregnancy, and for all parents, going forward, for God to protect them, and to keep them safe and healthy.”

~Terri and Paul Wanamaker

