



# First Reformed Church of Nyack

**Nyack's Hometown Church**  
Celebrating 186 years of  
service

Winter 2023

## Pastoral Reflections

What do you know about church that your friends don't? Why do we keep coming?

We keep coming to church because life is short, and we can't really make sense of it all. But God can. Because God IS love, we see a reason for the world to exist, and a purpose for our own lives. God's love without limit reveals a promise and hope to match our deepest longings.

That love wins over hate, and life overcomes death, assure us that the deep love, the capacity for joy, and the beauty at which we wonder are not erased at our life's end, but promise and point to the glories of a life yet to come.

We keep coming, too, because we want to get better at living so that life will get better for us. We believe—we believe! - that if following Jesus helps us love God and love our neighbor, our lives will be better. Like a baker, woodworker, or violinist becomes more skillful by practice, we can grow in kindness and compassion. And the kinder we are, the better we feel.

We come to church because in a world where people seem to care less and less about being good, from Russia invading Ukraine to scammers trying to steal your social security number, we still want to be on the side of good. God wants justice and well-being for everyone, and like world peace, it can begin in our own hearts.

We keep coming because Jesus says that the Holy Spirit can blow into our hearts and cause us to be born again. And do you know that being born again can make you younger? We all tend to get stiff with age—I mean, spiritually. God's Spirit rejuvenates people. Where age has inflicted us with narrow-mindedness, judgment, and cynicism, the Spirit reawakens hopefulness, idealism, and vision. Where are concerns have grown narrowly focused on "mine" and "ours," the Spirit broadens us, making us more welcoming, accepting, and inclusive.

We keep coming because an old hymn or a new song can help get the gratitude and praise flowing from our hearts. We keep coming because, whether the sermon shines or stinks, God sneaks in personal messages for us. We keep coming because our ordinary prayers, even the rote ones, are nothing less than divine love descending to us, circulating among us, and rising back to God.

All these things are true of you, and if you keep coming, they will become even more true.

~Pastor John



## First Reformed Church of Nyack

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**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  
Carolyn Travers  
Arlene Keiser (Clerk)

*Affiliated with  
The Reformed Church in  
America*



## Message from our Treasurer

Happy New Year all! I hope that 2023 will be a happy, healthy year full of love, family, friends and peace. Consistory has been busy working on our church life for the coming year. The tax donation letters were sent out a week or two ago. If you have any questions, please contact Mikki Baloy, our office manager, at 845-358-5518. I am looking forward to seeing you at our annual meeting on February 12th.

*~Margaret MacCartney, FRC Treasurer*

## Congregational Meeting & Souper Bowl of Caring



As football fans well know, the Super Bowl is right around the corner, and that means our Souper Bowl of Caring is too!

On **February 12**, we will hold our annual event to support those in our community who are food insecure. Please bring canned soups or other non-perishable food items, wrapped in a bill or a check, to support Soup Angels. (If writing a check, please make it payable to Soup Angels). Our Souper Bowl is also a special time to sit down together to share some wonderful homemade soups, bread, fruit, salad and dessert. All are welcome! Our friends from

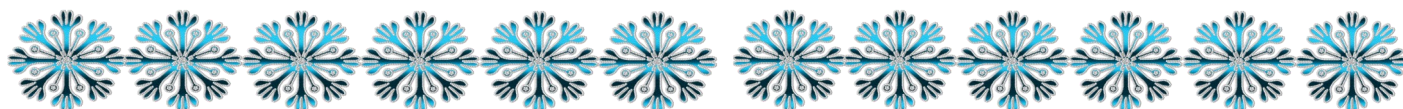
Piermont Reformed will join us in this happy time.

If you are planning to bring something, look for the sign-up sheet! Our congregational meeting will follow the luncheon.

*~Carol Russell*

## Gratitude

Pr. John, Ray, Jim, and Mikki extend their deepest thanks to everyone who contributed to the Christmas Purse last month. What a lovely gift we received as a result of your kind generosity—once again! It makes the holidays warmer to know we're supported by a thoughtful community. Thank you!





## Soup Angels

Soup Angels continues to hand out 400 or more meals on Mondays and Wednesdays as we head into our 17th year of service to the community, thanks to the immense support of First Reformed Church in countless ways. While last year we accepted 180,000 pounds of recovered food from grocery stores and big box stores around Rockland County, the side effect of this immense amount of groceries was a population of people attending Soup Angels that was beyond our capacity to serve in just four hours a week. We started reaching capacity in the Pitkin room, having more guests than our space could accommodate, and running out of hot food.

Since our Soup Angels mission primarily focuses on nutritious, freshly prepared meals, the Steering Committee made the recent decision to receive all our food donations from the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley, with some items also donated through TOUCH of Rockland County (Together Our Unity Can Heal).

**Soup Angels is still accepting canned goods and other non-perishable items.** What we receive from the Food Bank is rather random and some is free, but this will restore our equilibrium and return us to caring more personally and with continued dignity to all of our guests.

GOOD NEWS is that we are returning to Sit Down dining at Soup Angels on both Mondays and Wednesdays (as we did in 2019), plus offering meals "To Go" as we did in 2020-2023 and onwards.

Special thanks to the Consistory and to Skip and Carol Russell for helping us with inventory and many recent repairs.

*~Kathie Rife*

## Music

Now that all the frenetic energy of the Holidays is passing, time to regroup and look forward. One of many favorites at church, is worshipping in the Pitkin room. I love being so close to so many! I also enjoy playing my old friend, the 1905 Steinway, it looks remarkable, and still sounds well. And I sometimes think that people feel more comfortable singing in the P.R., the acoustics are less dry, and allow voices to blend together.

When we meet on the 12th, we'll be joined by our friends from Piermont, and to celebrate our Souperbowl of Caring, I've invited friends: Korliss Uecker, Metropolitan Opera star, and her husband Jerry Grossman, Met principal cellist, to join us again. CAN'T WAIT! I love sharing my fabulously accomplished friends with my fabulous church pals. They're always so well received.

On a separate note, many of you have followed the difficult journey of my canine pal, Fred, over the last 15+ years. Most Siberian Huskies are between 45 & 60 lbs and only live 8-10 years...How blessed were all who knew him, to be with this gentle giant (90lbs.+) for over 15 years. He is survived by his litter-mate Ginger. We're dealing.



*~See you Sunday, Jim*



## Remembrances



At the end of a good life, **Helen L. (Small) Weishaar** passed away peacefully at Cape Cod Hospital after a brief illness, on December 1, just shy of her 99th birthday. Born in Cambridge on December 11, 1923, she was the beloved daughter of Francis W. And Marian L. Small. Helen and her younger brother, Frank, were raised in Somerville, MA and East Greenwich, RI. Their summers were spent in North Truro with her Small cousins. She was a graduate of Northfield Mt Hermon School and Wheelock College. During her freshman year at Wheelock, she fell in love with Jeff, a handsome Harvard dental student from New York. They married on August 14, 1943 at Riverside Church in New York City. Their love story continued for 74 years. After the war, they settled in Nyack, raised their 3 children and were very active in church and school life.

As a longtime and well loved member of the Nyack community, Helen was a faithful member of the First Reformed Church, Monday Class, and the Morning Music Club. She enjoyed bridge games with her wonderful friends and was a talented seamstress, knitter and quilter. She created clever activities and adventures to entertain her lucky grandchildren. Helen loved her oysters paired with a lemon drop martini.

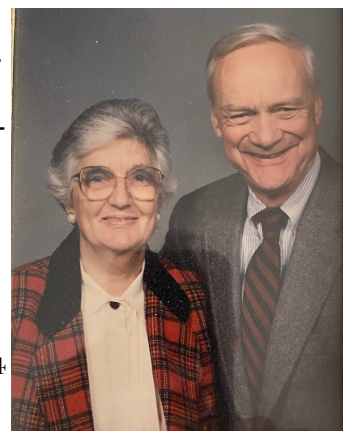
After Jeff died (2017), Helen moved to the Cape to be near her family and reconnect with her roots. Everyone who knew Helen will miss her, most of all her family. Her daughters, Marianne Hirschman (Bob) of Brewster and Marjorie Weishaar (Steve McGarvey) of Providence; her grandchildren, Allison Wetzel (Mark), Katy Killilea (Joe), Annie McGarvey (Rod Nadeau) and Evan McGarvey (Allegra Asplundh-Smith); her great grandchildren, Abby Wetzel (fiancé Kit Dillon), Melanie Wetzel, Jack and Briggs Killilea, Conor and Emma Nadeau and Winslow and Ignatius McGarvey survive her.

In addition to her husband, Jeff, Helen was predeceased by her son, Dana, her brother Frank, and her dear friend and great companion, Bob Dubis who passed away on November 22. The family would like to thank Broadreach Victorian Assisted Living and Liberty Commons for the wonderful quality of life and care they provided these past 5 1/2 years.

The family suggests that in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Soup Angels.

*From his son, Doug:* “**John Palmer** was born in Nyack in 1921. Mom was born in Montana in 1920. They met during WW11 when they were both Army officers and were married in Nyack 11/1/45. Dad had wanted to make a career of the Army, but an injury precluded that. He worked many years for Mount Vernon Mills in New York as a sales manager. Mom after raising the four of us, went into teaching elementary school at Upper Nyack School and retired in 1985. They moved to Montana in 1998. Mom passed away in 2013.”

*From Jill:* There are some of us in the church who remember the many years that the Palmer family participated in most everything related to the church. Along with their 4 children, Nancy, Sally, John and Doug they lived in Nyack on Tillou Lane off Sixth Ave. near the old Nyack High School.



Descendants of the Palmer family had a house on Clinton Ave. in South Nyack across from the church Manse. The Palmer name goes back to the 1700's. In Rockland, Fern and John Palmer were very faithful church goers, and like many families of the time, they sat in a certain row. Both were soft spoken, lovely people that you just wanted to be around. Fern was a Sunday School teacher as well as an elementary teacher who was loved by her students. Always smiling, they both had a very calming way about them. Along with Weishaars', Ogdens', Wanamakers' and others of that time, the Palmers' were pillars of the church. We were sad to see them leave the area.





## Sunday School and Bible Study

We can't start 2023 without thanking God for this wonderful Congregation and their loved ones for all the effort and dedication that went into our 98 th Annual Pageant. When we really look at the tremendous amount of time and talent that went into assembling and disassembling the scenery, lights and tree (Jim Cameron, Jon Biavati, Skip Russell, Paul Wanamaker), the travel from as far away as Pennsylvania, (Elijah Reich and Meredith Lee in college), the musicians (Kristin Jorgensen, Robert Genco, Simon Josuweit and Jim Rensink -who holds the Pageant all together) and the stupendous young people and adults who filled the roles, and parents and members who helped with costumes and excitement - you can only point to God with awe and gratitude. I especially love to look at the picture of the final scene of the Pageant which shows how many people have participated over the years and have brought back their children and grandchildren to continue the tradition which God uses to touch our hearts in celebrating the birth of Jesus.



*Some of the people in this picture have family that participated in the very first years of the Pageant over 90 years ago!*



After the Pageant the Sunday School thought about Jesus' genealogy using Jesse Tree stickers and also celebrated by decorating cookies. For the next four or five weeks we will be focusing on some exciting events in Jesus' ministry and beyond using vacation Bible school material and games. We will also use the time during Lent to focus on ways that we can use our God given gifts to bring Jesus' light into the world.

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



## FRIDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

On Friday mornings from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. we are gathering both in person and via zoom and telephone to read and learn from the book of John. Pastor's often recommend reading the book of John first if you want to begin reading the Bible more. We are using a guide that enables all of us to learn together. We welcome anyone who would like to join us. If you can't come in person and don't like zoom, we are also using telephones to keep everyone together. Let Bonnie know if you would like a copy of the study guide (201)391-9183. Do you have a friend or neighbor that you might like to invite? We have found that the more diverse our group, the deeper our sharing becomes.

~Bonnie Williams





## Community News

### LET'S HELP MARISSA DANNEY AND STEFAN RITTER

Many of us in the FRC family remember Pastor Tom Danney's daughter Marissa with great fondness, and take pride in how she followed her dad into ministry. Marissa is currently working 3/4 time as a Presbyterian pastor in San Francisco, and also teaches in a seminary. She and her husband Stefan Ritter have three children together, including baby Thea.

We have learned that Stefan is battling Hodgkin's lymphoma, and will be unable to work for up to a year as he undergoes and heals from chemotherapy. Friends have set up a GoFundMe web page to help the family. A good number of FRC members are contributing, along with Consistory plans to send an assistance check. To read more and to contribute, visit <https://gofund.me/2695c114>



Thank you Alexander & Simon Josuweit for sharing your beautiful piano playing during our church service.



Elder Skip Russell joined Pr. John on guitar for some hymns.



Miss Bonnie always has a great message of love and learning for our Sunday school children.



December christening of Natalie Stark Schiff with Catherine and Matthew Schiff, siblings Brody and Elle, godparents Diona and Jim Cameron and Great-grandpa Bruce Cameron. Natalie's family is so happy to have her blessed into God's loving hands.

