



New Beginnings— Annual Report

The First Reformed
Church

Annual Report &
January Newsletter

The Interim Pastor's Report for the January 2012 Annual Meeting

We're starting our ninth month together. We've journeyed from the end of Lent through a candlelight Christmas.

This is a congregation looking for a future. This is a people who remember how it was back when. We are a rich mixture of people who have different wants, different tastes, and different gifts to offer. We are people who even sport a few scars from years past. And we who are here today are people who want this church to be healthy.

We have started a process by which we will have opportunity to commit ourselves to some intentional goals. I introduced the consistory to an in-depth planning process which has begun a study of the community, our church, and its programs. This will likely be the most important project of the next half year. More than two dozen people have agreed to join in creating a mission statement and a compelling vision that embodies the hope of our congregation in 2012. In doing so, conversations long overdue can offer insights and challenges that establish a sense of progress. Every person can share ideas and hopes with one another as part of the strengthening of this congregation.

As you read the various reports, notice the diversity of tasks that call us to service. Many people give a lot of time to make sure all that needs to get done gets done. Many people give a little something extra. They don't call attention to it. They just do it.

Worship is one of the highlights of my week. The congregation is responsive and there's a lively sense of give and take. Jim Rensink manages to pull together a musical menu that draws on his resources and the many talents of our members. Bonnie Williams and those who assist in storytelling offer incredible gifts to us and our children.

The consistory worked through the summer, never failing to have a quorum as it worked on developing the ReVision material and turning its attention to tasks essential to attracting the next pastor.

If we share the work, if we listen to one another, if we manifest the love of Jesus, if we open ourselves to the Spirit, if we respond to God's gentle pull, this will be a year of blessings and the promise of a sustainable future.

With love and hope,

The Rev. William B. Doster

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Consistory Report—Chuck Travers, Senior Elder

Names of Consistory members:

- Rev. Bill Doster, Interim Pastor
- Chuck Travers, Senior Elder
- Kevin Graham, Treasurer
- Jon Biavati, Clerk
- Bruce Biavati, Elder
- Al Cann, Elder
- Kathie Rife, Deacon
- E J Lee, Deacon
- Jean Rensink, Deacon

Highlights of the year:

- In January we celebrated Tom Danney's 22 years of dedicated service to our congregation.
- In April we welcomed Rev. Bill Doster as our interim pastor to guide us through our search process.
- In November we welcomed the Jennings family as the new members of our congregation
- Also in November we celebrated the baptism of Elizabeth Christine Lowing.
- In December we celebrated 87 years of our Christmas pageant.
- Throughout the year, Rev Bill has exposed our congregation to new styles of worship.
- The consistory has revitalized itself during this past year, becoming more committed to not just our responsibilities, but to each other. We move forward in 2012, eagerly anticipating the congregation's involvement in the search for a new minister.

How people can get involved in 2012:

- Pray for the leadership
- Pray for direction in finding a permanent minister
- Participate in the various subcommittees



Music Director's Report—Jim Rensink

Dear Members,

The preceding year has been filled with many diverse, and extremely satisfying musical moments at the church. We have introduced many new things to the music program, including guitar accompaniment, male chorus, new kinds of music including down home southern Baptist and classical music made by some of the greatest artists in New York. With the consistent participation of so many new folks and so many old folks, we have been easily able to surpass what I thought would be our year's musical offerings. In almost every service, we have had choir participation and marvelous young brass players as well as flautists, harpists, violists and others. I have also enjoyed the opportunity of singing and playing myself on a more regular basis.

In early February, we had a jazz cabaret concert featuring renowned jazz artist Joe Dennizon and friends. This was a particularly unique musical event, incredibly well received and certainly bids repeating.

This year, for the first time in many years, the format of the Christmas brass concert was changed with exceptional success. The Pitkin room was the host space, decorated beautifully, and offered its fine acoustic. It was a wonderful and well received program- not only that – every seat was filled and additional tables and chairs had to be set. It also afforded the church the chance to hear one of its favorite folks, world renowned jazz pianist Dave Carey, as well as the Rensink boys and friends in concert.

We also had this year, as in previous years, principals from New York orchestras (New York Philharmonic, the American Ballet Theater and others) and best of all- this year, we added so many wonderful musical participants from Nyack College, the Rensinks and friends, Brian Jennings and chorister in training Charlie, Bill Doster, Carol Russell, Brian O'Donnell (as bass with the choir and Bass trombone), Michelle Cota, John Dedyo, The Wanamaker family, Carol Travers, Bob and Arlene Keiser. Having these people with us, and I'm sure I've left some people out (don't be offended), has made this year exceptional. One of the greatest things about our church is having people from all different levels of music making be part of our service; the new folks, the regulars, and guest artists. What a blessing it is to watch our young musicians participate and grow while at the same time, having the participation of professional level musicians like Kathie Rife, Arlene Keiser to enhance our worship experience.

As I have said loudly and often, making music with my friends is one of the greatest joys I have at this church. I am looking forward to another year of music making and fun.

—Jim Rensink

P.S. I have to keep re-editing this column because I am doing it with my family, and they keep reminding me of so many wonderful things that have happened and slipped my mind. Wow.

SUNDAY SCHOOL REPORT CARD 2011



Fishers of Children:

Shannon & John Dedyo

Michelle Esteban

Cindy & Kevin Graham

Margie & Brian Jennings

Jeff Lee, Stephanie Spear

Naomi Lee

Carol & Skip Russell

Carolyn & Chuck Travers

Mission of Sunday School:

To reinforce the family in teaching our young people that Jesus loves them; God has a special purpose for their lives and that they can experience His Presence through reading the Bible, prayer, and serving Him and watching for Him in everyday life.

Curriculum: Live B.I.G (Hear, See and Live Your Belief in God). January to June; Jesus Neighborhood Vacation Bible School June and July; Pandamania V.B.S. (Where God is Wild About You) September through November; Pageant rehearsal and Jesus' Birthday in December.

Spring Semester Events: Journey to Jerusalem with **Steve and Ginny Borton** leading children and families through the Last Supper and events of Easter Week. Easter egg hunt this year in the Pitkin Room with eggs containing Bible verses & candy. Children's Day & Vacation Bible School



I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35)

Easter Egg insert

**Sunday School Highlights:**

The Sunday School Spring Semester lessons usually began with a time to share “**God Sightings**”; experiences in which we were especially thankful to God or felt His Presence. Children shared the joy of being thankful for success in school and athletics or seeing a stag, a beautiful sunset or the shadow of the cross in the sanctuary stained glass window. Steve and Ginny Borton made **Journey to Jerusalem** a memorable experience as children and their families experienced the Last Supper and events of Easter Week.

Skip Russell with the help of Jim Rensink brought real excitement to some of the **Children’s Messages** during the church services. We will not soon forget Skip and Jim firing the Panda Cannon, or the baaing of the lost sheep, or ringing Christmas bells as the children went off to Sunday School to the tune of “Jingle Bell Rock.”

The students led the church service on **Children’s Day** and received their attendance awards. Their accomplishments were celebrated afterwards with a Sunday School picnic on the front lawn. Five more Sundays in late June and July were devoted to **Vacation Bible School** activities in which the students earned “Bible Memory Buddies” by learning Bible verses.

The kick-off in September began with another church picnic and children from *Pastor Bastien’s First Haitian Congregation* joined us for another Vacation Bible School called Pandamania. In November Sunday School children and the Girl Scouts led by Carolyn Travers and Cindy Graham donated many boxes filled with toys and school supplies for **Operation Christmas Child**, an annual event organized by Terri Wanamaker.

Margie Jennings brought new enthusiasm and a deep spiritual conviction to the **Annual Christmas Pageant** which she directed for the first time. She and husband, Brian played Mary and Joseph and Samantha and Chris’ baby, Elizabeth, starred as baby Jesus.



Website—Brian Jennings

Ministry Area: Web Site <http://nyackreformed.org>

Leader: Brian Jennings

Description of ministry area:

We seek to inform the community of the events and activities at The First Reformed Church and serve members as an information portal to the activities at the church. It is our hope that those seeking a church in Nyack will find us via our web site.

Names of leaders, team members and/or workers:

Brian Jennings

Highlights of the year:

- We had a woman and her son who are new to the area and had previously attended Gilead Presbyterian Church in Carmel find our church and attend a service based on information on the web site.
- We had 651 visits to our web site in the past year. 489 of those visitors were unique.
- 5.28 seconds was the average visit time for the site.
- 2,340 pages on our site were viewed and the average number of pages viewed per visit was 3.59.
- We began to add the scripture passages and the sermon titles to the web page each week, so you can read the scriptures ahead of time if you wish.
- This is the first year we have had the site active, so just getting the site live was a great accomplishment. We went live with this site on March 17, 2011.

How people can get involved in 2012:

- I would like to see people begin to contribute to the site on their own, specifically those members of the congregation who take photographs. I could easily teach people how to upload photos to the site. It is similar to attaching a photo to an email message. There are other areas which leaders could take on, if they wish. The content management system we are using, Weebly, was designed to make web site editing easy.
- I would like to develop a survey for members to take online which could help shape the content of the site. I developed a good portion of the site myself from whatever I could throw together. Input from the congregation could help us take the next step with the site. As we develop our mission, the web site should evolve to fulfill the mission.



Soup Angels—Kathie Rife

This past Christmas season Soup Angels has served a record number of guests; 88 for the Christmas meal alone. Our weekly average hovers in the mid 60's and includes entire families, plus more of the elderly, teenagers, the underemployed, chronically ill, unemployed and the homeless.

We will expand our offerings starting February 6 to a weekly additional meal on Monday evenings, 5:30 -6:30 pm. We are just completing membership on our 8 new teams, having trained 8 new captains to make hearty sandwiches, and include salad and occasional soups as well. Soup Angels is a non-sectarian soup kitchen that continues to be supported in part by those of faith who keep us and our needs in their thoughts and prayers.

Thanks to the First Reformed congregation for your faith in us.

Kathie Rife and Katie Berry for Soup Angels