

THE KERK

St. John's Reformed Church, 126 Old Post Road North, Upper Red Hook, New York 12571

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February 2012

VOL. 46, NO. 2

From the Interim Minister's Desk

Dear Friends;

When you read this, I hope that I am on a sunny beach in Florida, and may all of you who are stronger than Marvelle and I braving the winter weather, not have it too bad.

These next months are so important to you at the Church. The Search Committee and Consistory will undoubtedly be inviting a pastoral candidate for you to see. In many ways you will have to trust the very hard work of the Search Committee. They have prayerfully sought to know God's leading in who would best serve the people and ministry of St. John's Church. Receive the candidate with love and openness, seeking what new blessings God could bring to you through whoever is chosen. Open your hearts, as you have to Marvelle and me, that their ministry may be fruitful.

No matter, how events unfold, we will see you, God willing, in April for one or several weeks, as an appropriate finale. We will stay in touch by e-mail or phone. Make the coming of a new pastor, a matter of prayer. Each member prayerfully awaiting this new and hopeful chapter in the life of the congregation.

Be faithful in worship.
Open to possibilities.
Steadfast as Christ's servants.
Sensitive to the moving of God's Spirit.

Peace,
Pastor Dave

**FROM DESIREE'S DESK
ABANDON IT!**

There it was in one of those many articles in January publications on New Year's resolutions. The article was entitled "Let Your Resolutions Make You Happy" from USA Weekend's newspaper insert. The anonymous author wrote about making resolutions concrete or specific. Make them manageable, breaking them down into smaller tasks, not something that may take you all year to accomplish. Finally the author wrote to think in terms of resolutions that make you feel good, that bring "more joy, enthusiasm, and energy" into your life. One suggestion for a resolution was to "abandon a frustrating project." Really?

Being a first-born coming from a Mid-western family who lived and breathed the work ethic, giving up wasn't something I was allowed to do, or something I would have even considered. From time to time, I have heard this expressed in other families as "We are not quitters."

If we are truthful, I bet there is an unfinished project for most of us. Maybe you haven't yet begun it. If you never finished it, would you feel more relieved than anything else? What is on your perpetual to-do list that brings you guilt every time you think of it? Is it possible to admit to yourself that you are simply never going to get to it? Could you give yourself permission to abandon it?

What else might you abandon in 2012? Have you been holding onto anger or resentment for a long time that no longer has any real purpose? Have you been carrying shame for something that took place decades ago that no one besides you remembers? What do you think Jesus would say to you about that? Are there other areas of your life that you might consider abandoning? What might take a weight off your figurative and literal shoulders? What would leave you with more energy and more joy if you could abandon it? Yes, really.

*Desiree Albizu, Associate
in Ministry in Christian Education*

Note: I hope you are enjoying your daily Lectionary readings and that they are helping you understand the sermon and worship service each Sunday. There are still copies of the green reading guide for a minimal \$1.50 on the table in the fellowship hall if you have not been able to pick one up yet. Just begin on whatever day it is. Please know that we all have times when we get behind. Give yourself some grace, but do read the Bible with the rest of us at St. John's. Each day's reading is only a few verses of scripture.

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL PLANNING
BEGINS!**

It's time to order the sample curriculum kit for Vacation Bible School this summer. Dates will be August 13-17, 9 a.m.-12 noon, place TBA. All children ages 4 years and older are invited to join in the fun. Mark the week now on your calendar so you and your children will be around to join in the fun, fellowship and worship. Children get so much out of being part of this special week, celebrating God's love and worshiping with others from our community. Please consider ways you might assist as well. If you would like to lend your time and talents, please contact Desiree Albizu, (518) 537-4221 or albizu@valstar.net.



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

February 19 we will be making pretzels in Sunday School as is our tradition as Lent begins. Every class gets to participate, and the children enjoy sharing their efforts after the 9:15 a.m. worship service during Coffee Hour.



Friends are always welcome to attend Sunday School, and can join in at any time. Every lesson and Bible story stands alone. We especially encourage parents to bring children who may only be able to come every other week due to parental visitation. We understand your child's reality, and love them all the more when they can attend "for to such belong the kingdom of heaven."

EMMAUS ROAD YOUTH MINISTRIES

Mr. Roberts tells us that volleyball should begin soon at Devereux. Everyone in the Church is welcome to come and play or just cheer on the players.

The middle school students will meet Sunday, February 26 from 6-7:30 at the church.

March 18- Friendship Tea, 1-3 p.m. Tickets will go on sale in February. All middle school and high school students are encouraged to join in the fun. Students who are going on the mission trips will be able to earn credit toward their Workcamp balances.

There are still spaces left on the Workcamp July 31- August 6, but they will be released when our next payment to GROUP CARES is due March 1. Let Desiree Albizu know now if you would like to go on this trip.



Upcoming fundraisers: Gertrude Hawk Easter chocolates and Mother's Day Flower sales.

RCA SUMMER YOUTH CAMPS

Brochures are now available on the table in the fellowship hall for Camp Fowler in Speculator, NY. Later this spring we will receive brochures from Camp Warwick in

Warwick, NY as well. Both camps are RCA sponsored camps, and some popular weeks fill up fast. The last few years we had 8 children attend Camp Fowler. A couple went for more than one week. Students always return excited having made new Christian friends, and having experiences that are not always available to them at home. They are eager to go and be fed by God's word again the next summer.

College student Michelle Zeliph was part of the staff there last summer and will be back there this coming summer. High School student Ross Morrison plans to be a SWIM (Student Working in Ministry/Assistant to the adult in the cabins) there, too.

If there is a particular week that you would like your child to go to camp, then get your deposits in as soon as you know which week(s) he or she would like to attend. Some weeks fill up right away, especially "Triple A" at Camp Fowler for the high school students.

If you would like more information about either camp, or need financial assistance to make this a reality for your child, please contact Desiree Albizu, (518) 537-4221. Every child who wants to go should have the opportunity.

Also please contact the Church office once your child's week has been confirmed. We keep track of which children are going and what weeks they will be at camp for our own records. Thank you!

BOOK LOVERS' CLUB

? by ? will be our February selection when we meet Monday, February 20 at 11:00 a.m. in Room 3 in the Education Wing. All readers are welcome to join in these fun discussions.



MISSION OF THE MONTH FEBRUARY

The February Mission of the Month is The St. John's Reformed Church Food Pantry. Our food pantry provides a vital link to our community by helping families supplement their food budget with a bag of non-perishable groceries once per month. Currently there are 29 families on our list and we serve an average of 15 families per month.

The Deacons manage the financial donations from the congregation. These contributions and food donated by the congregation are the sole means of support for the pantry; although there is one annual donation from Crop Walk. The notices in each Sunday bulletin tell what is currently in need, and your contributions of food are a large help. They can be placed in the bin outside the Church office. These donations lessen the number of trips that our official shopper, John Roberts, takes to the grocery store.

Shari Juranic is our chief administrator, sharing a friendly connection with many needy people in our community.

Your prayers for the families who are in need of support and your support of our food pantry are a wonderful mission to our community.

Cary Robinson
Mission and Outreach Committee



WOMEN WITH FAITH (WWF) LAST MEETING BEFORE THE TEA

We will meet at the home of Marsha Piacente at 123 Shookville Rd. on February 24 at 7:30 p.m. to complete the plans for the

Friendship Tea coming up on Sunday, March 18. Please come with your ideas for butterfly party favors.

PROGRAM AND SOUP SALES

Scudder Circle invites you to enjoy a program by Desiree Albizu on February 2 at 1 p.m. in the fellowship hall.

Scudder women are sponsoring soup sales between the worship services every Sunday. Needed are soup makers and sellers. Please sign up in the fellowship hall.

Know as the Scudder Missionary Society, it was formed in 1877 honoring the Rev. Joseph Scudder, a missionary to India. The mission remains, as we raise funds for services near and far.

Beth Mead.

FRIDAY MORNING WOMEN'S STUDY: THE TRUE MEASURE OF A WOMAN

There will be a six week woman's study beginning on Friday, March 2 at 9:30 a.m. based on the book The True Measure of a Woman: Discover Your Intrinsic Value and See Yourself as God Does. In our society women so often measure their worth by their job description, their possessions, who we know or how we look. Author Lisa Bevere writes, "This is not the way it is supposed to be! You will never measure up as long as you keep trying to be someone else. God's plan for your life is good, pleasing and perfect and yours". Come discover God's plan for you through the author's experiences which will "expose the subtle influences and blatant lies that hold you captive." Some of the book's topics include past hurts and relationships, issues with food, body and fasting, materialism and cleaning closets, fairness and jealousy, and honesty- something for every woman. The

course book will be available to view on the table in the fellowship hall along with a sign-up sheet. The book cost is \$15. For more information, contact Desiree Albizu at 518-537-4221 or at albizu@valstar.net.

SEARCH COMMITTEE NEWS

As of the KERK deadline date, the Search Committee was to see a candidate preach in a neutral pulpit. It is the hope of committee members that a decision would be made to recommend a candidate to Consistory by the end of January. This would depend on whether the candidate would be willing to accept a call from our Church or might need more time to make that decision. If/when that happens; the candidate would be invited to St. John's to preach in the near future. The members of the congregation would get an advisory vote. The final decision lies with the Consistory. The Classis of Mid-Hudson would also have to approve the minister's call.

With Pastor Dave and Marvelle away for the next two months, they would return to St. John's after their vacation for a proper farewell reception. This will be announced well in advance and a postal mailing will go out to inform you of the final details.

Thank you for your patience with the process, and for your support, encouragement and prayers as we carry out the task laid before us.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

On December 4, 2011 we welcomed new members: **John and Jessie Duffy and their children, John and Sarah, Robert and Angelyn Haan and Fiona Meyers.**

On January 22 we again received new members: **Daniel and Tara Asher and**

their children, Ryan and Jacob, Beth Elston, Harold Fell Jr. and Linda Alamia and Aleighsha Rodriquez.

BAPTISMS

Lauren Evangeline Kenny was baptized January 8. Lauren is the daughter of Elizabeth (Kipp) and Jeremy Kenny and little sister of Natalie.

Jacob Asher, son of new members, Daniel and Tara Asher, was baptized on January 22.

New members, **Aleighsha Rodriquez and Beth Elston** were also baptized on January 22.

Sympathy to:

The friends and family of **Alma Crispell**, Dennis Frankle's mother, who died January 11.

Luis Rodriquez and family on the death of his brother, **Freddy Matos.**



Denny and Judy Doyle, Jane Bier and Joy Peterson for putting together the January Kerk and all the extra work it involved! **Elizabeth Kenny** for her office help and labeling the February Kerk.

Croatia Update

US move from Croatia distorts ‘normal’ for us

By Nancy Titus

My elderly father and I, at very different points in our lives, share an amazing number of similarities. For both of us, everything is a-kilter, a bit distorted, out of proportion.

Even something as simple as understanding what time it is has us both a little fuddled. My father is 87 and has lived alone for 10 years in a very quiet, rural setting, so it is understandable that he could become confused when he has no natural markers dividing his day or his week. My family and I have made an international move, quickly adjusting our watches but having a little more trouble getting our internal sense precisely matched up to the time on the dial and the day on the calendar.

We are over the biggest aspects of jetlag, but we are not entirely over the sense of not quite knowing where we are – in time or space or things even deeper.

That disconnect with our surroundings is part of the normal re-entry adjustment that missionaries returning from abroad go through. In many cases, re-entry can cause a crisis of its own, referred to as reverse culture shock. That is especially true if the mission work was done in an area where there is extreme poverty or hardship. I can easily see that such a situation would almost inevitably induce personal crisis.

Our mission setting in Croatia was on the surface not so different from the American scene. There, we had nice large grocery stores in which to shop, and we drove to them in the car provided by you for our use. We lived in a house large enough for each of our three children to have his or her own room (something we may not have here), and we routinely had pizza delivered on Friday nights.

Still, on an essential level it was completely different. The other day, Samuel and I went to buy some supplies for a box we mailed to a friend in Croatia, and as we left the huge store, he commented on how effortless the process was. It is not that the same kind of errand could not have been done in our Croatian context. The mechanics of it would have been more or less the same. Still, a fundamental

quality about it was not the same. It is in the way that it was done: the convenience, the friendliness, the array of choices, the low prices, the familiarity. All those things make up some of the background of how we as Americans come to think about things.

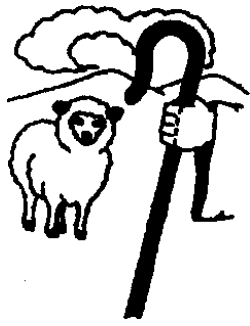
You will be glad to know that in this re-entry adjustment, we are not on our own. The Reformed Church in America, through your continued support, has provided a way for our family to deal with the big and small ways our lives have changed because of our service in Croatia. As part of that, later this month, we will attend a Debriefing and Renewal retreat in the Black Forest area of Colorado Springs.

This is a program specifically designed for missionaries returning to the United States after service abroad. This time will give our family a chance to stop and reflect on our experiences over the past years as missionaries. It will allow us to process the joys and struggles of cross-cultural living even as we ponder our future ministry and as we give both into the Lord’s hands.

Also, there will be special sessions for our children. These will be led by those who have lived as missionary kids themselves and understand the special challenges that go with sometimes feeling that the culture of your parents and even your own birthplace is more “foreign” than the “foreign” culture you have grown up in. For our children, the five and a half years they lived in Croatia was a significant part of their lives and sets them apart from their American peers.

Just as my siblings and I have stepped up to accommodate my father’s changing physical needs at this stage in his life, we are happy that the RCA will help us as we adjust to our new life back in the United States. Thank you for this and your continued prayers for us as we make this transitional journey.

Eric and Nancy Titus are RCA missionaries in Osijek, Croatia, where they work at the Evangelical Theological Seminary and with the Reformed Christian Church in Croatia. They have three children: Samuel, 17, Valerie, 14, and Penny, 12.
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The Shepherds Page

February 2012

God is Bigger Than. . . A Quarterback Sack



Having grown up in the south, I was taught there are 4 seasons: winter, spring summer and football season. I grew up yelling at football players on TV to “Get him!!! Get that guy with the ball!” Which really sums up football. There’s these guys trying to stop the ball and there’s these guys trying to move the ball but there’s only one guy with the ball. For me, the most painful thing to watch is a quarterback sack. Usually from the quarterback’s blind side, a beast of a man plows him down and the game screeches to a halt. Everyone waits to see if the quarterback is going to get back up.

Now imagine that your life is a football game and God’s plan for the world is the ball. Carrying the ball for the Lord means living your life more for others than for yourself. It means striving to be the guy in the end zone scoring a crucial goal for the Lord. Whether it’s standing out as a Christian at work or inviting the neighbor kids to Vacation Bible school , you’ve scored a goal for the Lord.

But what’s easy to forget is that sometimes, you get tackled hard and do not want to get back up. In God’s football game, Satan and his team are the ones dishing out the hits. We feel the hits when we begin to believe the things Satan wants us to believe. Things like:

- “You can’t do this.”
- “Who do you think you are?”
- Are you sure this is a good idea?”
- “Maybe you didn’t hear God right.”
- “You’ve done enough. Just forget about this.”
- “Those people think you’re nuts.”
- “If it’s God’s plan, it wouldn’t be this hard.”

I’ve been sacked by each of those hits more than once. It’s so tempting to drop the ball and quit stepping out for the Lord. Is living God’s plan really supposed to be hard? Yes. In John 17:15 Jesus’ prayed this for His followers: “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” In this verse, Jesus is telling us to expect 2 things. The first is that we should expect to go out into the world and to stand out as followers of Christ. The second is that when you step out, you’re going to need some protection from Satan. It makes sense to me that the more you step out and carry the ball, the more protection you’re going to need.

But do you know the thing that blows me away about this verse the most? It’s that Jesus knew that stepping out into the world as His believer would be hard so He already arranged for you to not go alone. That’s why He prayed that prayer. When the hits come- and they will come- turn to the power of prayer and scripture to get back up and head for the goal. Cuz there’s nothing like scoring one for the Lord!

Karen Tripp - Fall Lay Pastors Ministry Network news

Shepherds Serving St. John’s

Desiree Albizu - Jo Ann Fisher - Nancy Finkle - Denise Partrick - Amie Parker - Stanton Tremper - Joy Peterson - Eileen Zeliph - Linda Neilson - Carolyn Carr - Michael Carr -Marie Votava -Ruth Cole
Kristy Koerner - Wendy Walrath -Bruce Unson - Nancy Castillo -Terry Laibach - Alan Slingerland
Priscilla Tremper Shepherd Coordinator

To Request a Shepherd call the Church Office 758-1184 or Priscilla Tremper 758-5657

February Helpers

Flowers: If you would like to place memorial or special remembrance flowers in the Church, please complete a form and leave in the slot AND call Flower Chair Beverly Kipp, 758-8545.

Greeters & Ushers: If you cannot serve on the Sunday assigned, please phone, Captain Clifford King, 750-4893.

February 5

Greeters: Boy Scouts
Ushers: Boy Scouts
Shepherd:
Nursery: Fiona Meyer

February 12

Greeters: JoAnn Fisher and Elizabeth Wacker
Ushers: Peter and Janis Lawson
Shepherd:
Nursery: Denise Gilhooly-Partrick

February 19

Greeters: Michael and Tanya Wyant
Ushers: Don and Joy Peterson
Shepherd:
Nursery:

February 26

Greeters: Glen and Nicole Jensen
Ushers: Linda and Doug Search
Shepherd:
Nursery:

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Deadline for the **March**
Kerk is **February 10**.

Personal ads of no more
than 3 lines will be
accepted for \$1 per issue.
Business ads in the form
of a business card to be
photocopied will cost \$5 per issue.



RCA Missionary Update

from Caleb and Joanna Swart

The Daasanach people, who live along the Omo River in southern Ethiopia, depended on the flooding of the river to provide food for their families until windmills were introduced to irrigate gardens along the river. Caleb and Joanna Swart are continuing and expanding the RCA mission work of the Windmill Project. Caleb has plans to build an additional fifty windmills, which will be owned and maintained by the Daasanach people. Joanna, a nurse, will work in prenatal and immunization clinics. Caleb and Joanna have three children, Elsa, Ezra, and Daisy and they join Caleb's parents, Dick and Donna Swart, in this work.

Ethiopia facts:

- Population: 73,053,280
- Size: 1,119,683 square kilometers (slightly less than twice the size of Texas)
- Major religions: 45-50 percent Muslim, 35 percent Ethiopian Orthodox, 12 percent animist, 3-8 percent other



MINISTRY

Evangelism and Medical Work

LOCATION

Southern Ethiopia

PARTNER

Kale Hiwot National Church of Ethiopia

CONTACT

Caleb and Joanna Swart

Box 127

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Email: swart.joanna@gmail.com

LEARN MORE AT

www.rca.org/cswart

Dear Friends,

December 2011

In a lot of ways, it's easy to forget holidays here. The weather is all wrong, the seasons don't cooperate and forget to change, and the over-marketing that contributes to the mood of holidays has yet to stretch its influence to South Omo. But that's okay. Because in this month of November, while we won't eat a turkey and our family will still be far away, I'm feeling thankful.

I'm thankful for the full flood of the Omo River and abundant rainfall this planting season for the Daasanach. In light of the continued reports of drought and the food crisis to the east, south, and west of us, every rain drop has truly been a God-send. We've lifted our faces to the sky and felt the drops fall on us, knowing that the Daasanach will fill their grain stores again this year. I'm thankful that despite 'progress' further up the river (major dam projects on the Omo River that will dramatically affect all of the people groups south of the dams who depend on the annual flood of the river for planting), this year, the river flooded its banks and saturated the earth. The sorghum is growing, thick and green, covering the land for miles.

I'm thankful for the continued faithfulness of the men and women who pour their lives out for the church in our village. Nanuk. Marta, Hanna. Berhanu. Nikkorman, Semola. Erogit. Sometimes, the work can be discouraging.

But still, these people faithfully open their homes and give. They open their hearts and share. They stay strong when the temptation to fall away is great. I'm thankful, because they are an example to us—to not give up, to keep praying, to keep our hearts open to the people around us.

I'm thankful for my kids. We've begun a new journey in our house: home schooling. After a couple of false starts, the last couple of months we've gotten into a groove and really started to enjoy this time together. With the help of some wise friends' advice and some most excellent books, home schooling has begun to seem like less of a certain failure and more like a precious gift I've been given.

I'm thankful. I'm thankful for you. For all of the notes we receive, the prayers lifted up on our behalf, the support and encouragement that comes our way, I am thankful. I'm thankful for the group of children in the middle of Michigan who went out of their way to connect with my children.

I'm thankful for the promise of the hope we have in putting our faith in Jesus. In the midst of uncertain times, continued difficulties with obtaining permits to stay in the

country, and the inevitable doubts that come about where we belong, we entrust it all to the One who holds us in His hands. With hope, we can continue what we're doing, knowing that the One in whom we put our trust is fully trust-worthy.

Giving thanks,
Caleb, Joanna, Elsa, Ezra and Daisy Swart

*To access extensive information about
Caleb and Joanna Swart, or to make a
financial gift for their ministry, simply go to
www.rca.org/cswart.*

*Did you know that you can receive Dear Friends letters directly to your own e-mail and that by
doing so you are helping RCA Global Mission be a good steward of your gifts?
To sign up, contact Eva Fennema at (800) 968-3943 or efennema@rca.org.*