



THE KERK

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

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OCTOBER 2024

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Minister's Musings

I went to the dock, you know the one,
down the wooden stairs, that ends up propped in the bays?
Bugs invaded my space around my head - or is it the other way around?
The wind danced playfully in my hair and I noticed.

I took time to slow down and
listen. watch. observe.

I noticed the continuous ripple on the surface of the water,
graciously
reflecting the blue and dappled white sky above me.

I noticed the tiniest spider climb up and down one single
strand of my hair.

I listened as the bugs trilled and chirped alongside the sporadic
and rhythmic melody of at least five different types of birds.
I felt the sun's warmth commingled with the delicate beginning
of fall breezes.

Unclenched my jaw, took deeper breaths.
Naturally, felt my heart rate slow a bit – took deeper breaths

and offered a prayer of thankfulness for this tiny mercy.
this ability to acknowledge and embrace this particular stillness.
To have the mindset gifted from the last four weeks of study.
For the acknowledgement and ability to embrace my role in this world
and my smallness in it.

I offer to you this poem as a culmination of the Season of Creation that came out of a
visit recently to Tivoli Bays after our time studying the Word together. Thank you for
joining me in this Season with open hearts and minds.

Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier
Minister of Word and Sacrament

Faith & Education



Bible Study

In the month of September, Bible Study participants followed along with the scriptures from the Caring for Creation program to help prepare for worship instead of concentrating on the Revised Common Lectionary passages. John Roberts will return to the Lectionary scriptures in October once again. Bible Study meets Wednesdays at 10:15 a.m. All are welcome whether or not they have read the Bible verses in advance.



Children's Program

There is a Sunday School class for children aged three years through second grade each Sunday led by Mrs. Wambach. These children attend regularly, which allows us to offer this class. We would still like to offer a class for the older children. Unfortunately, their attendance is sporadic. This makes it difficult to line up teachers and the students don't want to be the only one leaving worship for a class of one. We will keep working on this.

We also need nursery care for the little ones who are too young for a Sunday School class. This would allow some of the older students to attend Sunday School as well. Let Eileen Wambach or Desiree Albizu know if you can help teach or offer nursery care on occasion. These are two vital roles as we rebuild the children's program after the pandemic.

Instruction on the Lord's Table will also be offered this fall for those children 9 years old or third grade and up. The bulletin will offer more information in the weeks to come.



Book Club

The Book Club will meet on Monday, October 14 to discuss *The Reading List: A Novel* by Sara Nisha Adams. The group is open to suggestions for new books to read. Anyone who has read the book or listened to it is welcome to join in the discussions. The November book is TBA.



St. John's Monthly Prayer Service meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m., in the sanctuary. The next monthly prayer service is October 1. Prayers are offered for St. John's missions, for the local community, for those on the prayer list, for those who are unable to gather with the congregation for worship, for personal prayers, and for anyone in need of God's love.

For more information, please see *James Walrath*.



Blooming in Faith Women's Fellowship meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the fellowship hall. The next meeting is October 2, at 7 p.m.

We gather for fellowship, prayer, and to create art. For more information, please see *Elizabeth Young*.



Scudder Circle

The women of the Scudder Circle met on September 5th for a time of discussion, fellowship and refreshments. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday October 3rd and will be held at 1:00PM in Room 3 of the Education Building. The November 7th meeting will be at 1:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall. Our December 5th meeting

will be a holiday lunch out at noon at CJ's Restaurant. There will be a signup sheet for the December lunch. All women associated with St John's Reformed Church are invited to join us. Our group has decided to donate an additional \$200 towards our own food pantry bringing our total donations to the food pantry in 2024 to \$600.

We will begin the collection of gently used jewelry for our annual sale at the Christmas Bazaar. If you have items to donate please look for the donation box on the worship table in the Fellowship Hall. The Christmas Bazaar has been scheduled for November 23rd. Many of the members of Scudder will also be contributing pies and other foods for the bazaar refreshments.



Mission and Outreach A Blessing Bag

At the last M & O meeting in August, committee members discussed the idea of carrying around a Blessing Bag in our cars. We may not encounter homeless people in our community as often as those who live in larger cities, but we can be prepared to help those in need in this small way. A Blessing Bag contains practical, mostly non-perishable items such as a bottle of water, granola bars, crackers and snacks, beef sticks, tissues, wipes, socks, gloves, deodorant, a toothbrush and toothpaste, whatever you feel appropriate for the areas you travel. The bag could be as simple as a Ziploc, or maybe a mesh bag with a drawstring. Perhaps the winter's mice might get to the food first, but those items can be replaced. You may want to place a small Bible or New Testament or other booklet of inspiration in the bag as well. Be creative and be prepared to bless someone.

RUMMAGE SALE

**HOUSEHOLD
ITEMS/APPLIANCES/DECOR**
(NO FURNITURE OR CLOTHING)

There will be a Housewares Sale on Thursday, September 3 from 5-8 p.m., Friday, September 4 from 12 noon to 4 p.m. and on Saturday, September 5 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Set-up begins on Sunday, September 29 after Coffee Hour when we will begin taking in sales items. Housewares from the kitchen, bathroom, living room, and bedrooms, including small appliances, towels, bedding and wall hangings. Items will be accepted until Wednesday, October 2. Proceeds will go to the food pantry..

Help will be needed to lay out sales items throughout the week, during the sales, and afterwards as we clean up and take things down to the Assembly Hall where items will be available to the food pantry clients after the sale. If you can help in any way for any amount of time, we thank you.



Winter Coat & Boot Drive 2024!

As signs of the seasons changing begin to appear, our thoughts turn towards cold weather preparation. Two of the most requested items for our annual Christmas Presents are coats and boots so our Mission & Outreach committee has decided to hold a Winter Coat and Boot drive for the months of September and October. This is our third annual drive, and we hope to make it a tradition. We ask that gently used winter coats, jackets, parkas, snowsuits and snow boots of all sizes be dropped off in the collection boxes located in the education wing and in the fellowship hall. These in turn will be cleaned as needed and gifted to any in need. Of course, new items are also welcome, but it is great to reuse as well. Thank you!



PROPERTY COMMITTEE – LATE SUMMER 2024

The Property Committee of St. John's has been very busy this summer taking care of the maintenance and upkeep requirements of the church buildings and grounds. In the summer season, a great deal of time is spent mowing, weed whacking, trimming bushes, and weeding the flower beds around the church and the parsonage.

Other ongoing tasks include multiple headstone repairs in the cemetery, various painting projects, storm (tree) cleanup, masonry repairs to Education Wing entrances, septic system maintenance, and parsonage water heater and dehumidifier replacement. Bids are also being sought to repair gutters and to repair or repave the cemetery road.

The committee has a yearly calendar that is reviewed at every meeting to ensure all required items are completed. If a special skill is required for a project, we will get a professional contractor to help us out.

SJRC Facts: The St. John's Reformed Church property consists of 2 parcels of 8.26 acres and 4.01 acres for a total of 12.27 acres. The present church building, the second on this site, was erected starting in 1870 and is now 154 years old. The present parsonage was built around 1875. The original church steeple was removed in 1962 and was replaced by a smaller one. The Education Wing was completed in 1972.

A very interesting book titled *St. John's Low Dutch Reformed Church, 200th Anniversary, 1788-1988*, is available in the office to borrow and read a more detailed history of our church.

Property Cleanup Day is Saturday, November 23, please see *Glenn Countryman*, Elder of Property if you would like to volunteer.



Volunteer Drivers

To all who recently signed up on sheet about driving members to doctors appt. I will be coordinating the rides when needed. If I hear of a person needing a ride I will speak to the person and then contact one of you. Thank you for doing this. I feel the need will arise at some point.

God Bless,

Eileen Zeliph-Shepherd Coordinator



Fresh Flowers in the Church Sanctuary

If anyone would like to place fresh flowers in church, there are a few easy ways to do it!

1. Purchase flowers, or
2. Cut flowers from your garden, or
3. Send the church office a donation

Vases are available in the kitchen cabinets to the left of the refrigerator. Flowers can be arranged in a single vase; however, double vases are best for communion Sundays. Flowers need to be in place by 9:45 a.m.

If you want a dedication to someone near and dear to you, we will make sure it gets in that Sunday's bulletin.

For questions, please contact the church office at 845-758-1184 or see *Terry Laibach*.



Sunday Service Streaming Changes

YouTube Live streaming of our Sunday Services starts September 29th. Zoom streaming has been discontinued. To access YouTube Live go to our website and click on the YouTube Live icon. At this time YouTube does not support Closed Captioning for YouTube Live streams with less than 1000 subscribers. We are adding the closed captioning to the Live stream, you cannot turn it off. If you prefer a different arrangement of the closed captioning on the screen, please let us know. You should notice the higher video resolution YouTube does not support chat rooms on Live streams that can be viewed by Kids (people un the age of 18). You can email comments on the Live stream to SJRCavteam@outlook.com where they will be looked after the service completes. For more information, please see Doug.



Saturday, November 23

A note from the Arts & Crafts Ladies, Our Christmas Bazaar is Saturday, Novemeber 23rd. Once again the Arts & Crafts Group is hoping to have a white elephant table; but, WE need your help! If you have clean, gently used Christmas decorations, ornaments, holiday items and/or Thanksgiving items-please save them for us. We will accept your donations by Sunday, November 17th.

If you can help set up on Frid, November 22nd, please let Eileen Zeliph or myself, JoAnn Fisher know. If anyone ccan help with sales during the sale, it would be greatly appreciated. Any questions, please ask! All profits from the sale will go back to the church for the general funds and needs. Thank you, *JoAnn Fisher and Eileen Zeliph*



"My sincere thanks for your cards, phone calls, food, and mostly your prayers expressed of sympathy for the passing of my brother, Mark. Losing a family member is hard but knowing my Church family grows stronger and loving-is a blessing."

*Thank You!
JoAnn Fisher*



A special thank you to each one of you for all that you do for St. John's Reformed Church's family and for the upkeep of our church buildings and grounds. Each prayer, each act of kindness, each "job", each opportunity to show hospitality, each gift to missions, are so very much appreciated!



November 2nd ends Daylight Savings Time.

Don't forget to fall back and set your clocks one hour behind. Change the batteries in your smoke detectors too.

Consistory Minutes September 19, 2024, Meeting

Present: President- Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier, Vice-President Desiree Albizu
Elders- Glenn Countryman, Terry Laibach, Elizabeth Young
Deacons- Eileen Wambach, Clifford King, Mary Hennessy, Laurie DeCiutiis
Elder Wendy Walrath has resigned effective, August 31, 2024.
Guests- Douglas Westcott- Finance Committee, George (Hop) Michael- Finance Chairperson

Pastor Alisha opened the meeting, at 7:35 p.m., with a devotion, based on Psalm 148, followed by discussion and prayer. She stated that God is capable of caring for each one of us.

The minutes were approved, M/S/C (motion, seconded, and carried) with corrections. A motion was made to adjust the order of items on the agenda so the Finance Committee could present the 2025 Proposed Budget and discuss “new” financial reports. All were in favor, the agenda with changes was approved, M/S/C.

Pastoral Report: Pastor Alisha reported that she led worship for 10 Sunday Services, attended a Classis Meeting and a Classis Clergy Meeting over the summer. She served at Bill O’Neil’s funeral. She continues to work on formatting and putting together SJRC’s Policy Handbook. She presented information on a Classis Grant opportunity.

To approve Pastor Alisha’s report as presented, M/S/C.

Financial Review: Douglas Westcott and George Michael presented and reviewed a new report “Profit and Loss Comparison” containing a summary of the total operating expenses and the total operating income. They stated that this new form should make it clearer to understand our financial situation at the end of the month. The summary of the church’s expenses/incomes will be included in the monthly Kerk. Doug facilitated a discussion pertaining to an Investment Policy and a Financial Policy Overview that are being developed.

2025 Proposed Budget: George presented the budget reviewing areas that discussion should occur. Most of the “unknown” figures are personnel questions. Salaries cannot be determined until after COLA (cost of living adjustments) are made

To approve the Financial Review/Reports as presented, M/S/C.

Committee Reports:

Faith and Education: In the month of September, Bible Study participants followed along with the scriptures from the Caring for Creation program. Return to the Lectionary scriptures will occur in October. Sunday School class for children ages three years through second grade occurs each Sunday. A class for the older children has been offered, unfortunately, attendance has been sporadic. The Book Club will meet on Monday, October 14 to discuss The Reading List: A Novel by Sara Nisha Adams.

Fellowship: Over the summer it has been very busy with providing fellowship hour on a weekly basis. Two Sundays had special fellowship time due to visiting missionaries. The Shepard’s Ministry hosted an Ice Cream Social which was a huge success. The Fellowship Committee thanks the congregation for their support.

Finance Committee: Glenn reported that Emily Halstein has agreed to audit our financial records and procedures. A Zoom meeting with Emily, George (Hop), Glenn, Doug and Kristi occurred on Tuesday, Sept. 17. Discussion took place to clarify expectations and plans going forward. GuideOne Insurance Company has raised their rates, which will be reflected in the budget. The 2025 Proposed Budget is almost completed. Hop continues to work on the Finance Mission Statement and Responsibilities for SJRC’s Policy Handbook.

Mission and Outreach: Laurie reported that September's MOM is to support the food pantry. The Hunger Lunch was a huge success and \$611 was donated to the food pantry. The Houseware Rummage Sale is Oct. 3-5. Proceeds will be donated to the food pantry. Collection of sale items begins on Sunday, Sept. 29 after worship service and fellowship hour. The annual Winter Coat and Boot drive has begun. Donations of gently used winter items can be left in the box in the fellowship hall through October. These items will be available to the food pantry families in November.

Property Committee: Glenn highlighted a few items stating that many items are completed off the maintenance calendar. However, there are also many projects still needing completion. If anyone is willing and interested in assisting, please see Glenn. See the Property report for more details. Consistory members thanked Glenn and the Property Committee for all their hard work.

Technology: Pete highlighted that worship services will be streamed by using YouTube Live instead of Zoom. This transition occurs on September 29. Volunteers to help with running the sound system and YouTube Live are being sought out. Many committees and even outside groups have benefitted from using the TV in the fellowship hall to show pictures, PowerPoint presentations, and reports. Thank you to Doug for all his hard work.

Worship: Pete stated that there's a recommendation to extend Joseph (Joey) Breslau's hiring through December 2024. A vote will take place during special recommendations. St. John's has been hosting student recitals under the direction of Zoe Auerbach, a local violin instructor. Terry and Pete met with Zoe over the summer. An agreement was made that in lieu of payment, Zoe would supply musicians for services once per month. The anticipated start date is in October. Worship has encouraged the congregation to participate in a voluntary fresh flower supply rotation for Sunday services during the summer months. There was not a great response. Fall displays of pumpkins and gourds will be displayed until Advent. The communion liturgy insert was updated over the summer.

To approve the Committee Reports as presented, M/S/C.

Working recommendations and special reports:

WCR#1: Continue employment of Joseph (Joey) Breslau through December 2024, at \$125/service. After discussion, a motion to accept WCR#1, was seconded, and passed.

Safety Seminar Discussion

Elizabeth provided updates on the progress of the safety assessment. She stated that we have three options: 1). Complete a safety walk through on our own. 2). Contact the Red Hook Police and Red Hook Fire Departments for a walk through. or 3). Reach out to other law enforcement agencies. Robert (Bob) Haan was contacted by Elizabeth and has offered to help us organize a training using the AED device. It was suggested to formulate a task force to identify a plan of action with St. John's Safety plans.

Information pertaining to the Regional Synod of NY's Food Grant Program was distributed. Discussion took place on the requirements and the Deacons agreed to apply for this grant.

To approve to adjourn the meeting after prayer, at 9:15 p.m., M/S/C.

The next regular meeting is October 17, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi Colburn,

Clerk of Consistory



Financial Report

St. John's Financial Statement (as of August 2024)

Monthly

Month of August Income: \$13,994.63

Expenses: \$14,455.84

Net: -\$461.21

Yearly

Year to Date Income \$136,255.57

***Pass Through** \$3,255

Net: \$133,000.57

Year to Date Expenses \$160,680.75

Net -\$24,425.18

*A pass through is something that requires documenting but does not stay in the general fund. Examples are Endowment Funds, Memorial Funds, Bequests, and Missions of the Month.

**Prepayments are expenses that have been paid ahead of their due date. Examples are insurance premiums and PIM shares for our missionaries.

Did you know:

October through mid-November is the time St. John's congregation financially prepares & plans for the new year ahead?

This is when the tentative budget is finalized by Consistory and the Finance Committee for presentation to the congregation. It will culminate at the Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday November 17th.

Here are the dates to make note of:

Monday November 4th

The proposed 2025 Budget mailing will be distributed this week (email or USPS if requested) with 3 items needing attention:

- 2025 proposed budget
- informational letter
- 2025 "Estimate of Giving Card".

Sunday November 10th

There will be an all-important "**Congregation Question & Answer Meeting**" following the worship service. Please review the budget and have any questions or comments for the discussion. Staff, consistory and committee members will be present to represent all aspects of the proposed budget in hopes of addressing all questions.

Sunday November 17th

Following the worship service, the "**Annual Congregational Meeting**" will address three important tasks:

- affirmational vote on the 2025 Budget
- election of new consistory members
- "Estimate of Giving Card" presentation.

Please take the time to consider your 2025 giving and have the statement prepared for presentation. Although the card doesn't ask for your name or envelope number, the sum total of all cards returned can give a guesstimate of expected 2025 income. This is when St. John's Congregation makes financial plans for next year, supports it with newly elected consistory members and makes a statement of financial support for a new year. Please mark these dates on your calendar and be prepared to participate in this important annual event. Thank you! **The Finance Committee**

CONSISTORY NOMINATIONS BALLOT Current Consistory Members

Elders

Desiree Albizu-Education
Glenn Countryman– Property
*Wendy Walrath – Mission
& Outreach
*Terry Laibach-Worship
Elizabeth Young-Fellowship

Deacons

*Eileen Wambach-Education
Clifford King-Property
Laurie DeCiutiis – Mission
& Outreach
*Pete Fenaroli-Worship
Mary Hennessy-Fellowship

***Their terms on Consistory will be completed in January 2025 and you are nominating people to replace them.** The others listed are currently serving and should not be nominated.

The Consistory asks you to offer nominations of **active** members to the Nominating Committee and Consistory who have the gifts and talents to serve on the Consistory as an Elder or Deacon and on the Education and Mission and Outreach Committees.

You are encouraged to speak to people before you nominate them.
Terms are for three (3) years.

If **YOU** are willing to serve on Consistory, you may nominate yourself.

Your Name _____

(for **member verification** only)

(Place completed form in ballot box on table in back of Church, or mail to the church office)

DEADLINE: October 14, 2024

Duties of an Elder

The elders of our congregation are responsible for the spiritual guidance and discipline of the family of faith. This is achieved through oversight of what is preached and taught, the maintenance of the membership rolls, the visitation of those members who have fallen away from active fellowship with the church, the discipline of those members who do not keep the vows that they made upon joining, and by the offering of the Sacraments in such a manner that they are not abused.

Duties of a Deacon

As a deacon you are called to serve the church and the world in ministries of mercy, service and outreach. To give that service focus and direction, Reformed Church in America deacons concentrate on six areas of ministry:

- 1) Special Individual and Family Concerns
- 2) Stewardship Education and Congregational Giving
- 3) Mission Involvement
- 4) Volunteer Service
- 5) Reformed Church World Service and Hunger Advocacy
- 6) Caring for Creation and Simple Living

The particular committees that need individuals with specific gifts and talents this year are:

Education – this committee works closely with the Coordinator of Children’s Ministries, Desiree Albizu, in planning, overseeing and leading the education programs for the children, youths and adults of this congregation.

Mission & Outreach – This committee is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of the various mission activities that the congregation participates in. Examples include Mission-of-the-Month, RCA Missionary Support and local concerns.

Worship – this committee is responsible for the setting up of communion, preparing for baptism, the changing of the liturgical colors. They also assist the pastor, as needed, with any special services.

Calendar

Worship Service

Sundays **10 a.m. in person** and join us on YouTube Live.

Access our website, (www.stjohnsreformed.org), scroll down on the page and click on YouTube Live icon. You can continue to access the weekly bulletins by clicking on the dropdown box "worship service" and select bulletins. Each Sunday's bulletin and announcement page are posted.

Children's Ministry Program Sundays at 10 a.m.

Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs. (off site), Fri.-Sabbath Day

Kristi Colburn, Administrator Mon., Wed, Fri., 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.,
Tues. & Thurs. 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. **On Vacation: Sept. 27- Oct. 4**

Michele Zagorski, Financial Consultant working remotely

Food Pantry Distribution Mon. 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wed. 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Bible Study Wednesday at 10:15 a.m. in the fellowship hall

OCTOBER EVENTS/MEETINGS:

Monthly Prayer Service Tuesday, October 1, 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary

Blooming in Faith - Women's Group Wednesday, October 2, 7 p.m., in the fellowship hall

Scudder Circle Meeting Thursday, October 3, 1 p.m., room 3 in the Education Wing

Houseware Rummage Sale Thurs. Oct. 3, 5-8 p.m., Fri. Oct. 4, 12-4 p.m., Sat. Oct. 5, 9-noon.

Men's Breakfast Saturday, October 5, 8 a.m. at the Elizaville Diner

Property Meeting Tuesday, October 8, 7 p.m., in the fellowship hall

Old Dutch Village Garden Club Thursday, October 10, at 12:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall

Finance Committee Meeting Monday, Oct 14, 7:00 p.m., in the fellowship hall

Book Club Monday, October 14, at 10 a.m., in the fellowship hall to discuss the book,
The Reading List: A Novel by Sara Nisha Adams.

Elders Meeting Thursday, October 17, 7 p.m. in Room 3

Consistory Meeting Thursday, October 17, 7:30 p.m., in the fellowship hall

Boy Scout Leader's Meeting Thursday, October 24, at 7 p.m. in Room 4

Deadline for the November Kerk is October 21

If you would like to receive the Kerk by e-mail (a little more reliably on time than the paper version being mailed to your home) e-mail the church and let us know.



Shepherds Page

OCTOBER 2024

CHANGES

Here we are in the middle of fall, with all the changes which we are dealing with. If we think about those changes like the summer to the fall weather, leaves changing color, changing the type of clothes now from t-shirts to sweaters, warmer coats, changing the window screens to storm windows. Change in our eating habits, shorter daylight and going to bed earlier. All these things cause us to sometime not want change and argue why does change have to happen but change can be a good thing.

When we consider change, we really need to focus on the better benefit that change does give us. It may even give us an uplift of our emotions, a better attitude, and a better alternative. When I think of change in a religious way it can seem confusing and enlightening in the same breath. For example, the Bible has two different testaments (Old and New) with one focus more of the life of Jesus after his birth and Jesus's teachings. I'm sure those people who lived in those times wondered what or why this change and is this better or worse. We all know how much better our lives were when Jesus came, changed religion and changed our lives forever.

Well, we know that the life Jesus led and what he taught were probably the best changes this world has ever known. Those changes we all use to guide us, strengthen us, and enrich us. So we need to then look at change and work with it. Now, I know change can be hard to handle sometimes and sometimes change isn't all it's cracked up to be. We need to see change as an opportunity to change, upgrade, or improve something about ourselves. Perhaps change our thoughts on progress, live in the future and not the past, give more of ourselves to others, change a bad habit. Whatever happens, good, bad or indifferent, you give it your best shot.

Sometimes think of what changes you've seen in your lifetime; for me for example, cell phones, electric vehicles, people walking on the moon, computers and robots that work faster than any human being can. Now some of these changes maybe better if they never happened but the bottom line is that both of us have changed because of them. So really think of what change has and can do for you. With God's help we all can be the change for the better, So go forward in change.

So a challenging thought, what kind of change are you thinking about and willing to make for yourself? Will it be a life changing moment, day, or even a lifetime? Embrace it!!!!

Respectfully submitted,
JoAnn Fisher
Shepherd

Shepherds Ministry Serving St. John's Reformed Church

**Desiree Albizu
Kayla Bell
JoAnn Fisher
Terry Laibach**

**Amie Parker
Linda Neilson
Denise Gilhooly
Eileen Zeliph**

**Wendy Walrath
Mary Hennessy
Marie Votava
Stan Tremper**

Information on Pastor Eric's Book:

Pastor Eric's *Eight Months at Mount Sinai* publishes

by Nancy Titus

It's here!

Eight Months at Mount Sinai: A Theologian Reflects from Death's Borderland has published!

Your prayers together with the prayers of many others made the content of the book possible. He details some of the support you gave in the book itself.

Pastor Eric's reflections from his long hospitalization after his liver transplant will move you to remember his precarious journey and your vigils for our family during it.

From the back cover:

"This book is for those who are suffering or have suffered, as well as those who have faithfully accompanied a sufferer on a lonely journey. Readers will not find platitudes here but may just find a voice that understands."

He shares transparently about many of his hospital struggles from eating to hallucinations to the inability to speak. He spends a chapter on the community of faith that surrounded us — with emphasis on the three churches in New York that he has pastored, including Pultneyville Reformed Church.

And he says some really nice things about me.

Rather than a chronological depiction of the transplant surgeries and their aftermath, the book deals with the themes of mortality, suffering, loss of identity, sacrifice, loneliness, heartbreak, the grace of God, and the persistence of faith.

Particularly moving are Pastor Eric's descriptions of the biblical meaning of hospitality, specifically in welcoming the stranger. He recounts his own troubling emotions over the incomparable gift of a liver and a kidney from a young deceased donor and his family,

strangers to him and yet now with him always.

"There is a curious form of hospitality going on inside of me. My body had to welcome a stranger. Our bodies have immediate, negative, and powerful reactions to foreign entities. The first reaction is to fight and to do so with the intention to kill."

Of course, he must take medication for the rest of his life to overcome this natural response.

"The author of Hebrews, perhaps, knew that the natural tendency of a community is to shun, exile, harm, or even kill the stranger and that the church might find the stranger threatening. Hospitality, in the way Scripture understands it, is difficult. It grinds against natural inclinations, and it demands daily attention to the command to never forget to love the stranger because one never knows when a visitation from God may come on account of it."

In the afterword, I detail a little of what I went through, a bit of the story of the sustaining prayer that kept me going. You were part of that strong and invisible sustenance that fueled me so that I could assist him and our family.

Copies of the book can be ordered with the author's discount via sign-up. Author's discount copies are \$15 for paperback or \$25 for hardback. Deliveries will be made on one of our periodic returns to the Hudson Valley. Those who don't want to wait can go directly to the publisher at wipfandstock.com or Amazon, where the price is \$19 for paperback.