

# THE KERK

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

Phone: 845-758-1184; Fax: 845-758-3675; email: [office@stjohnsreformed.org](mailto:office@stjohnsreformed.org)

---

July/August 2026

VOL. 65 NO. 7

---

## *Minister Musings*

Every year, the Reformed Church in America meets somewhere in the United States for the annual General Synod meeting. General Synod is the gathering of all of the Synods, represented by every classis, represented by various ministers and elders. These people gather and worship, vote on changes and actions and help discern the direction of our denomination. This past June, the General Synod took place in Nashville, TN. With her permission, I will share some of what Rev. Kendra Van Houten shared in her report after her time at General Synod this year.

---

"The King is still Kinging!" These are the words of the Vice President, Rev. Dr. Kristin Brouwer on her Sunday morning sermon. It was the 219th General Synod that held consistency, laughter, tears, where delegates ushered in a new season of life and ministry. Several delegates throughout this year's General Synod noted that this was a new synod, that conversations we had over the past five days were met with grace, love, compassion, and discernment. Whether we agreed or disagreed on the outcome (and even the process), the dialogue was one that was cordial and grace filled. It appears, our now smaller denomination has rekindled our love for Jesus, recalled our love for one another – Christ's church, and rediscovered our voice. While there are many areas where growth is still a process, we share the following to be a few highlights, and hope that you will take some time to read through each statement, and the many others as we begin to proclaim God's love and presence in this world!

- On Christian nationalism: The General Synod adopted a statement declaring Christian Nationalism to be in opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The professorate, along with Rev. Bill Te Winkle, drafted the statement at the request of the GSC and the Commission on Theology:

We believe God governs this world through both church and state. The church is to affirm authentic faith and show fruits of the Spirit, seeking wholeness and care for everyone. The state is to work for the safety, security, and peaceful order of all those under its care. Full humanity is both spiritual instructing us in faith and righteousness and politically educating us to be citizens. We must not misapply to politics God's call to spiritual freedom. The church must invite the state to greater nobility, freeing the enslaved, relieving the oppressed, comforting the afflicted. We have a necessary voice in the public debate but, as Christ's body, gathered around Word and sacrament, we must not conflate national identity with God's reign, lest we mute our prophetic voice and replace discipleship to Jesus Christ with political ambition. We belong to Jesus Christ, not to anyone or anything else. We are called to influence the public square through persuasion rather than coercion, to work for unity among all people and nations, to reconcile everyone, and to stand in God's Spirit without the corrupting influence of temporal power. Christian Nationalism represents a false church, fundamentally distorting the gospel. Trusting in our Triune God, we call on all Christians to renounce this error and work for justice, wholeness, and peace for all.

- On Immigration: Another recommendation from Christian Action passed by large majority and without discussion. The directives of the adopted recommendation are to instruct the general secretary to write a letter to the U.S. president urging the protection and fair and dignified treatment of immigrants, and to encourage classes (middle assemblies) and congregations to engage in public advocacy on behalf of immigrant communities by writing letters to their government representatives urging the same, as well as writing letters to media outlets, asking them to cover immigration-related news items in a fair and dignified manner and to fully cover important immigration-related issues. Additionally, after much discussion, and the forming of an AdHoc Committee to work a statement, the following was approved.

We, the delegates to the 219th General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, acknowledge the truth that every person is made in the image of God (Genesis 1). We are called and commanded to love the stranger (Deuteronomy 10) and show hospitality to foreigners and prisoners (Hebrews 13). Therefore, we denounce the immigration policies of any government that treats people as less than human. As followers of Jesus Christ, we cannot remain silent when the US government: utilizes racial profiling, detains without proper judicial warrants, arrests and deports without due process, practices cruel and inhumane treatment (including, but not limited to, deprivation of adequate food, sanitary facilities, and medical care), subjects anyone to physical, emotional, or mental assault, separates children from families, engages in third country deportations, operates mass detention centers, and transfers of individuals as a means of inhibiting legal counsel and preventing family contact. We confess and lament our role in supporting such a system and recognize any and all such actions as sin. "The church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged.... in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others." (Belhar, Art. 4)

- On the conflict in the Middle East: The General Synod approved an amended recommendation calling for the general secretary to write a letter to Prime Minister Netanyahu with concern over expansionism and the lack of equal treatment for Palestinians; calling upon RCA members to "contact senators and representatives demanding that funding for Israel be stopped until Israel stops its expansionism"; and instructing the GSC's Office of Finance to study potential divestment strategies and policies, for report to General Synod 2027.

- On mental health and disabilities: A new commission will be formed in the coming year to focus on how to support, encourage, and equip churches in their ministries to support friends living with mental health and disabilities (both visible and invisible).

There was a generous amount of work that was before us, and we could go on and on, however, we encourage you to spend some +me looking through the General Synod's website, and when Aaron, our Stated Clerk sends out emails with updates, please take some time to read through them as there were several ac+ons that include encouraging middle assemblies in how they might navigate support for everyone.

---

If you would like to read Rev. Kendra's full report, please contact me - I'm happy to share it!

***Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier,  
Minister of Word and Sacrament***

## Faith & Education



### Bible Study

Bible Study in July will continue to focus on passages from Genesis, Matthew and Romans. Studies this year are from Year A of the Revised Common Lectionary. Hand-outs for 2026 which list the passages for July to December can be found on the table in the fellowship hall or on the St. John's website, [www.stjohnsreformed.org](http://www.stjohnsreformed.org). Everyone is welcome to read along whether or not you attend. It will also prepare you for Sunday's upcoming service. You are welcome to join the study any Wednesday you are free. Bible Study meets Wednesdays at 10:15 a.m. in the fellowship hall. Each week Bible Study closes in prayer.



### Children's Program

We will continue to offer a Children's program each Sunday during the summer. Although attendance may fluctuate with vacations and weekends away. We may even get a few Sunday mornings outside depending on the weather.

On Children's Day, June 14 we gave Bibles to third graders David Sheehan and Samantha Buring. We also recognized Eileen Wambach and Cera Buring for teaching the children during the 2025-2026 program year. Thank you to those ladies for all their efforts to bring the children to Christ.

We have a couple new additions to the nursery. They are getting acquainted with the current nursery caregivers.



Congratulations to Lyla Carr who graduated from Red Hook High School on Saturday, June 20. She plans to attend Smith College in the fall where she will major in English. Lyla is also the recipient of the Rev. Roger and Bernice Leonard Scholarship! Congratulations Lyla!

This Sunday we will be recognizing her achievement! Come and celebrate!



### Book Club

Book Club will meet Monday, July 13th at 10 a.m. to discuss *Mona's Eyes* by Thomas Schlessler. It is art history and history oriented in general so not a quick read. Desiree has a book with the works of art from the Louvre, so she will bring that to share along with print-outs of each piece of art from the other museums in Paris. Fifty-two works of art in total were examined by the characters in the book. We may go longer than usual that morning..

Upcoming reads in no particular order are *Wild & Distant Seas* by Tara Karr Roberts; *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi; *The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans, and *Anxious People* by Fredrik Backman. Keep those suggestions coming. Thank you.

Anyone who has read the featured book or listened to the audio is welcome to join in the discussion.



**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 July 7.

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 second Tuesday of the month in the fellowship hall. The next meeting is July 14, at 7 p.m. We gather for fellowship and to create art. For questions, see *Elizabeth Young*.



**Blooming in Faith's Women** invite you to join them on a Hudson River Cruise on the Rip Van Winkle on Sunday, July 26 at 2:30 p.m. leaving from the Kingston City docks. The cost is \$35 per person, if over 65 it's \$30 per person. A signup sheet is on the worship table in the Fellowship Hall. Everyone is invited to this fun, summertime activity!



A big thanks to all who helped make our June 7<sup>th</sup> Church Picnic a happy time for all. Especially a BIG thanks to those who helped set up our Church tent, set up all the tables and chairs, as well as returning the tables and chairs back inside and taking down the tent. Thanks for the two gas grills and the pop-up tent. Thanks also for all the delicious covered dishes and desserts. Sorry for the delay in getting the hamburgers and hot dogs cooked faster, but when they got grilled, I think everyone enjoyed them. Thanks Max, for the sing a long, too!

Hopefully, everyone enjoyed the picnic and Thank God for the good weather as well. I enjoyed seeing so many people sitting and talking and enjoying each other's company; that's what fellowship is all about!

Respectfully submitted JoAnn Fisher and the Fellowship Group!



## **Scudder Circle**

The women of the Scudder Circle gathered on a beautiful June day for a delightful lunch outside on the patio at The Grove overlooking the greens of the Red Hook Golf Course. With the generosity of those in attendance we agreed to donate our offering along with some additional funds from our treasury for the purchase of school supplies, the June Mission of the Month. Desiree Albizu volunteered to shop and found six lovely children's backpacks to donate to this mission.

We will not meet during the months of July or August. We will resume meeting on Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup> with a luncheon at noon in the Fellowship Hall. Desiree Albizu will coordinate a lunch of cold cuts and cheese with rolls, salads and desserts. Pastor Alisha will present the program. Please save the date and join us for this time of fellowship.

We will meet on the 2nd Monday in October (12<sup>th</sup>) and November (9<sup>th</sup>) in the Fellowship Hall. Our December meeting will be a luncheon at the Wunderbar Bistro in Rhinebeck. For this luncheon we will meet at noon on Thursday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. Please save this date for a joyful time of fellowship.

If you do any sorting or cleaning over the summer remember to set aside any jewelry you might be able to donate for our sale of used jewelry at the annual Christmas Bazaar. We will begin collecting jewelry in the fall.

On a final note we received information that Joshua Bode and his family will be wrapping up their missionary work in Oman and returning to the United States in September of this year. If you would like to send words of support to them as they make this transition you can find their current mailing address and email address on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall.

Scudder Circle is open to all women associated with St John's Reformed Church. For more information, please see Mary Bayer or Desiree Albizu.



## **Mission & Outreach**

Many thanks to all who donated to June's mission of the month, School Supplies for our Food Pantry Clients' Families.

Our pantry patrons can utilize the pantry one time per month, so starting the collection early this year will ensure we are well stocked for distribution beginning the first week in August. Please place your items in the bin in the fellowship hall. Monetary donations are most welcome as we have volunteer shoppers 😊

**School Supplies:** 24 count Crayola crayons, #2 pencils, plastic/soft pencil cases, colored pencils, markers, black and blue erasable pens, highlighters, glue sticks, glue, scotch tape, scissors, pencil sharpeners, 12" rulers, Post It notes, index cards, erasers, loose leaf paper, wide rule composition books, spiral notebooks, 1" and 2" binders, notebook dividers, 2-pocket folders, antibacterial hand sanitizer, art smocks (adult t-shirts), and backpacks.

### **The Mission of the Month for August will be World Vision's Clean Water Fund.**

World Vision is a faith-based global charity that has existed for 75 years to serve in the places where it is hardest to be a child - in the midst of famine, disaster and genocide. It is the leading nongovernmental provider of clean water in the world.

We can hardly imagine a life without water and find it annoying to be without it when we lose electricity. Yet for 1 in 10 people on the planet it is a reality. This includes the 800 children under 5 who die every day from diarrhea caused by contaminated water, poor sanitation and unsafe hygiene practices, Millions of women and children walk an average of 6 kilometers every day to get water, keeping them from school and work, robbing them of a fulfilling life. That is like walking from the southern traffic light in Red Hook to St. John's.

We can help these kids and families experience the transformation of lives when communities get clean water. Every \$1 we give to the Clean Water Fund is matched by \$5, so please give generously to this mission.

Thank you for your constant and continued support of the **Mission and Outreach Committee** who represents the servant hearts of this congregation serving The Lord with Gladness.

**The Consistory did not meet in June. They will meet on July 2, 2026 for their June meeting. There will be no meetings in the Summer.**



***We extend our sincerest condolences upon the passing of  
Glenn Engasser and Irene Harrison.  
May the Lord provide comfort to all those who are mourning.***



# Shepherds Page

July/August 2026

English Shepherds

At a recent “Blooming in Faith Women’s Fellowship” gathering, during one of our discussions a question was asked, what’s your favorite “English” description. I had to think fast and the first thing to my mind was a period (.) (like the end of this question). Since English wasn’t one of my favorite school classes (gym was truly my worse). PS: think of coming to one of these gatherings.

Later, I was thinking about this English? and thought about our Shepherds program. First, we need to refresh our minds of English. There is a Noun (thing or person), Verb (action), Adjective (describes a noun), Adverb (describes how something happened), Pronoun (replaces a noun), to mention the main ones. After that little English refresher, doesn’t our Shepherds and the Shepherd program fit each of these. For example, Eileen Zeliph (noun) is our head shepherd (adjective) who coordinated and runs the program (verb). She helps our shepherds and keeping our program working (adverb). Each of St. John’s Shepherds all fit these descriptions as well. BUT, did you know, each one of you are a shepherd, especially if you reach out in a caring way to anyone, whether you do it in person, a phone call, a card, a visit, a text, etc., you are a shepherd. This is Jesus, the Best Shepherd of all, he touched lives and changed lives. Don’t you feel uplifted when someone has caringly reached out in some way to you?

So, say your name and then tell yourself, I’m a good shepherd and use each one of those English terms to describe you and your shepherd techniques. Let us hear what your best shepherd technique is. Let’s turn a shepherd into “SHEPHERD(S)” (pronoun, plural). Even our “care bears” that are in the back of the Church are absorbing prayers and hoping to be given to someone who may need a hug, a message of care and love, so even those ‘Bears” do shepherd’s work!

Did your English lesson for today, help give you a school refresher. Don’t worry, there is no real homework or tests. Time for a nap or recess, or whatever works for you, or get a drink of water.

I’d like to end with a saying I heard. No author’s name was given, “Stop telling yourself you’re not qualified or good enough. Growth happens when you do things you’re not qualified to do!”

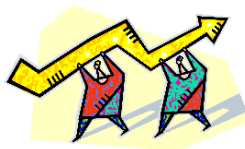
God Bless,  
Respectfully submitted Jo Ann Fisher – Shepherd

## Shepherds Serving St. Johns Reformed Church

Desiree Albizu  
Kayla Bell  
JoAnn Fisher

Denise Gilhooly  
Linda Neilson  
Marie Votava

Amie Parker  
Mary Hennessey  
Eileen Zeliph



**Finance Report  
St. John's Financial Statement**

**Month of May**

Income        \$11,802.50  
Expenses     \$24,389.71  
Net            **-\$12,587.21**

**Year to Date 2026**

Income        \$106,883.56  
Expenses     \$113,875.08  
Net            **-\$6,991.52**

**Finance Narrative to Consistory for May 2026**

May had five Sundays. The monies collected for the last week (ending May 31) were deposited on June 1, so it is not reflected in the May results. The June report will include this deposit.

Donations with instructions were received. Some of the money was requested to go to Scudder, Property and the Shepherds. Since church policy is not to hold money for committees, their individual budget lines will be increased by this amount for 2026. Scudder money will be transferred to Scudder, the Property and Shepherd money will be added to their committee's yearly budget for 2026.

**FCR#1: Finance recommends and agrees with Consistory that an additional \$630 be distributed to Red Hook and Tivoli Fire Departments, to be split as they see fit, for a total donation of \$1000.(Two checks split evenly between the two departments for \$370 has already been sent.) (Finance recommendation #1 to be voted on at the July 2, Consistory meeting)**



**PROPERTY COMMITTEE – Summer 2026**

Happy Summer from the Property Committee. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this great country is right around the corner. There has been a lot of outdoor work done on our campus, both by committee members and others who just enjoy working outside and getting their hands dirty. A lack of rain has kept the grass pretty brown, but the weeds somehow thrive when it is dry. The flower beds are blooming quite nicely and the shrubs and trees have been trimmed and maintained. Thanks to all who have helped with these tasks.

The fire alarm system has been ordered and we are now waiting for the engineering design to be completed before the actual installation can begin. Again, we are grateful for the church family who has made a generous donation to make our church buildings safer.

The ADA automatic door project for the Fellowship Hall entrance is in limbo at this point due to the mid-Hudson and Orange County Classis reorganization. Many folks are working diligently to form new committees and to determine what funds may be available to allow for grants. Stay tuned for future information on this.

We wish for everyone to have a safe and happy summer. If you find that you have some spare time, please consider helping out the Property Committee or any other church committee you may be interested in.

Cheers and Blessings from the Property Committee.



## How to Access Chmeetings from your Computer

- On your web browser search for ***www.chmeetings.com***
- Click on **Login** in the upper right corner
- Under I am a church member click on **Find My Church**
- In the Find box enter **Red Hook NY**
- Click on the **St John's Reformed Church Red Hook NY**
- This takes you to our Guest page.
- To login click on the **round circle with a head** on the upper right corner. This takes you to the Login page.
- Then enter
  - your **email address** and
  - your **logon password**.
- Once you enter these click on the **Log In box** and you will get to our Member home page where you can use the member directory and see our groups.

### Chmeetings and the Kerk

Several people have clicked on the unsubscribe from email message sent from Chmeetings sent by the church. This option is located at the bottom of every email sent using Chmeetings. You need to be aware that we use Chmeetings email lists to send the Kerk. By unsubscribing from Chmeetings messages sent by the church you are also unsubscribing from the Kerk.



### Streaming Sunday Services:

To Stream Sunday Services- Go to our website ([www.stjohnsreformed.org](http://www.stjohnsreformed.org)) and click on the box, "join live". It's at the button of the home page. To access the weekly bulletin and announcements click on "services" and then "bulletins and announcements". If you miss services, SJRC's YouTube Channel is the place to go. Find the service that you missed and click on the picture of the church.



**Deadline for the September Kerk is August 24** 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. 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; [office@stjohnsreformed.org](mailto:office@stjohnsreformed.org)

**\*\*\*PLEASE REMEMBER THAT WE DO NOT PRINT AN AUGUST KERK\*\*\***



## **Calendar**

### **Worship Service**

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

Access our website, ([www.stjohnsreformed.org](http://www.stjohnsreformed.org)), scroll down on the page and click on YouTube Live icon. To access the weekly bulletins, click 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.

**Pete Fenaroli, Volunteer Bookkeeper** Tuesday mornings

**Food Pantry Distribution** Mon. 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wed. 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
More information pertaining to the Food Pantry is on SJRC's website.

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

### **JULY/AUGUST EVENTS/MEETINGS:**

**THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES/GROUPS ARE NOT MEETING IN THE SUMMER.**

**Consistory**

**Elders**

**Finance**

**Garden Club**

**Men's Breakfast**

**Property**

**Scudder Circle**

**Monthly Prayer Service**, Tuesdays, July 7 and August 4, 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary

**Book Club**, Monday, July 13, 10 a.m. in the fellowship hall

**Blooming in Faith Women's Group**, Tuesday, July 14 and August 11, 7 p.m., in room 3

**Shepherds Meeting**, Sunday, July 19, following the worship service

**Blooming in Faith's Cruise on the Hudson**, Sunday, July 26, 2:30 p.m.

**Mission and Outreach Meeting**, Sunday, August 9, following the worship service

**\*\*\*Please refer to the weekly calendar on the announcement page found in your bulletin and in the online bulletin for updates\*\*\***