

HURLEY REFORMED CHURCH

THE SPIRE

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 10

DECEMBER 2013



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of my favorite Scriptural characters is the prophet Elisha. He lived and 'worked' roughly 800 years before our Lord's birth. He was a disciple of Elijah, and assumed Elijah's mantle (literally), and the prophetic vocation which accompanied the tunic's bestowal. Both prophets lived at a time of profound infidelity to God in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. A host of fertility gods, known collectively as Baal, were imported by a succession of Israelite leaders beginning with King David's son, Solomon. Each village along the Mediterranean coast, then known as Philistia, had its local Baal, and its devotees practiced sacral prostitution. The god, Molech, also hailed from that area. Molech demanded much from his followers. They were called to sacrifice their infants in adoration, on the fiery altar of this bloodthirsty deity. Along with Baal, Molech found a home in Samaria, the Israelite capital. Then there was Chemosh a warrior god worshiped by the Moabites. While Baal and Molech came from the West, Chemosh was imported from the land of Moab, a people hostile to Israel who lived East of the Dead Sea. Thus the leaders of Israel surrounded their God

with idols made of wood and stone.

Elijah performed a number of miracles—including the overflowing of olive oil and flour so that a widow and her son could live, and then raising the widow's son from the dead. Elisha duplicates the same feats with a new cast. Nevertheless there were differences in the prophets: On one occasion which we know, Elijah fled from Queen Jezebel who wanted to kill him. The reader learns that the prophet was profoundly distressed, so much so, that he asked God to end his life. We are not told that Elijah's follower had a similar bout of despair. Elijah distanced himself from the corrupt and immoral monarchy whereas Elisha seemed more comfortable in royal circles. Perhaps the biggest difference is that Elijah was translated to heaven in a fiery chariot; in other words he didn't die. Thus 8 centuries later before and during Jesus' life, fellow Jews believed Elijah would come again, and rid Israel of the Roman occupiers who had conquered the Holy Land in 63 B.C. under the direction of general Pompey. It was thought by many that the ascetic John the Baptist was Elijah come again. While some Jews believed

that John was the forerunner of the Messiah— the position of Christians— others believed that John himself was the messiah—a hope which did not end with John or Jesus' (earthly) life. Small pockets of believers as far East as Babylon and as far West as Spain held out hope that Elijah, as the Baptist, would come a third time.

The new life which Christ offers disturbs if not throttles old ways of thinking, believing and living. And out of death comes a rebirth which is rich beyond our imagining.

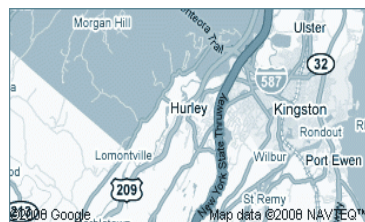
In the New Testament Elijah is important because of his influence on messianic expectation. Elijah appears in literature of the time outside the New Testament. Elisha does not. In fact Elisha is only mentioned once in the New Testament when Jesus preaches his controversial sermon in his hometown of Nazareth (Luke

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4:24). Nevertheless the latter prophet is just as important, perhaps more so, than his teacher. There is a wonderful story about Elisha healing a foreign general, Naaman, of his leprosy (2 Kings 3). This tale hints of Christmas and beyond. Naaman comes from the East, the Northeast specifically, and brings much of his wealth from his hometown of Damascus, the capital of Syria in order to pay royally for anyone who can heal him. He has been told by his wife's Hebrew slave that there is a prophet in her homeland who can deliver the medical goods. Elisha is living, for the moment, as a solitary, and does not meet Naaman, but rather tells his servant to have Naaman bathe in the Jordan seven times.

At first the general is incensed. This lowly prophet from Israel, a weak foreign land, dares to send a messenger instead of presenting himself to royalty! Besides this impudent prophet, Naaman remarks that Elisha's puny Jordan is nothing to write home about compared to the mighty rivers which flow around and through Damascus. Nevertheless his servants convince him to bathe in the Jordan. In an instant, Naaman is cured of his pride as well as his leprosy. And



Local Missions Linda Dux, Chair

In December we have the opportunity to give our help, both monetarily and prayerfully to the Board Members of the Reservoir Food Pantry in the Boiceville area of Ulster County. A small number of volunteers have been delivering canned, boxed and fresh food to about 25 homes in the area weekly. Many of these people are unemployed, disabled, elderly or just plain down on their luck and hungry.

The Board is seeking money for food but also for filing fees so they can attain non-profit status and be eligible to join the New York Food Bank distribution network so they can receive larger quantities of food and then open a "walk in" pantry where they expect to serve up to 300 individuals weekly. This is a mighty task and one we can assist with. Thank you for sharing your gifts.

he becomes a follower of the one true God. He wants to present his riches to Elisha, but God's man refuses. Then he presents a strange request: That he might be given "as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon, and he is leaning on my arm, and I bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this." (2Kings 5:17-18)

Elisha presents a wonderfully generous, and loving orthodoxy

when he replies, "Go in peace." (vs. 19).

Naaman reminds me of the magi we find in the Gospel of Matthew (2:1-12). The magi, probably Babylonian astrologers, and the general both come from the East. Well, well-heeled, both bring riches to present to a prophet, and infant messiah respectively. Both have made a journey away from paganism—the Babylonians of Jesus' day worshiped a variety of gods—to faith in the God of Israel. We know that Naaman returns to his master and the fertility god, Rimmon, with a troubled heart. No longer can he find comfort in Damascus because he has been

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STICKLEY GARDENS

A long time ago I was at Arlington Cemetery in Washington, D.C. and I went to visit the grave of President Kennedy. It had snowed during the night and when we arrived at the grave there was a set of footprints in the snow leading up to and from the eternal flame. Laying on the area that had been brushed off, there were several roses. The guard told us that we had just missed Mrs. Kennedy who had visited the grave site a few minutes before our arrival.

I have often pictured in my mind the solitude of the moment that was there just before us. I can imagine how quiet it was... how she must have felt in the moments she spent there... and the tracks in the snow to exhibit a love and concern for her husband. I picture the same kind of solitude for Stickley Gardens in the winter days ahead of us. Wrapped in a blanket of snow it can be as quiet and silent as the snowflakes that fell to earth. A time to remember and recall and to let the significance of a moment shared in honor and respect at the eternal resting place of a President or a family member, or just a friend. You and I can find the same kind of tracks in the snow as we visit the Garden in the quiet of the peace found by those we honor there.

FOR MORE INFORMATION – CONTACT ANY OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

LISA LONGTO (331-1438) CHAIRPERSON
JIM PIRRO (383-0079) TREASURER
ESTHER STICKLEY (331-2919)
SANDIE GREGORY (338-7626)
DIANA CLINE (338-7276) CONSISTORY LIAISON
REV STICKLEY, SECRETARY

A SACRED PLACE OF BEAUTY AND CONTEMPLATION.
(LOCATED ON THE SOUTH LAWN OF THE CHURCH)

"Magnificent E's" **Bible Study** meets on Tuesday at 7:00pm and Wednesday at 7:30am in the Dutch Room. We are studying the ministries of Elijah and Elisha as presented in 1 and 2 Kings.

Church School Calendar:

Fri. 12/20, 7pm -

Pageant Rehearsal

Sat. 12/21, 10am -

Pageant Rehearsal

Sun. 12/22, 11:15am - Christmas Pageant

Sun., 12/29 - No Church School



Women's Ministry

On November 6, 2013, we met to appoint a new leader since Karen Schiff moved out of the area. Our new leader is Deb Zuill. She took over for Karen during her illness and under her leadership we had a very successful retreat. We also came together to see if we would be having another Retreat like we had last year and it was unanimous that we would. Our next meeting is December 11, 2013 at 7 PM at the church. We invite all those who are interested in bringing women together, furthering the LORD's work. Members are: Shirley Ruth, Pat Baker, Helen Sgroi, Nancy Sweeney, Lori Baker, Marilyn More, Carla Paton, Roberta Falatyn and Joyce Pinckney. We are busy now getting our Retreat for next year under way. Stay tuned for more information.



Church Directory

Church Photo Directory

By the time you read this, our Directory will have been proofed and returned to Lifetouch. Upon completion, the Directories will be sent to the Church. We will let you know as soon as they arrive. I know you, too, are looking forward to them.

Again, THANK YOU to everyone who had their photos taken and THANK YOU to everyone who helped.

~Deborah Tucker, Chair

(Continued from page 2)

radically changed. His homeland is now an alien land to the general. For the sake of his master, and his job, he must pretend to worship Rimmon. How difficult that must have been. His life was a lot easier before he went to Israel! The American novelist Thomas Wolf noted that one can never go home again. We know the disturbing implications go far beyond geography.

But what of the magi who followed the star eight centuries after Naaman? Matthew tells us that the astrologers, upon finding Jesus' house, "bowed down and worshiped him" (2:11). After presenting Jesus with gold, frankincense, and myrrh, they returned to their country. What was that return like? Did they find themselves adrift in a land which was no longer familiar? Did they struggle to maintain their astrology vocation because the great light of Jesus diminished all lesser lights? Matthew does not tell us. But the poet T.S. Eliot does. At least he speculates. In his poem, "Journey of the Magi", Eliot suggests that the terrible difficulties they encountered on their journey to Israel were nothing compared to the psychic shock they experienced when they arrived home. They are shaken, the poet tells us, by a spiritual death which was harder than literally dying. Here is the conclusion to this marvelous poem:

*All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and
death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.*

The magi embrace both Christmas, and the season of Epiphany which follows. For us they embrace the spiritual truth that encountering Jesus is transformative. Jesus changes us. The new life which Christ offers disturbs if not throttles old ways of thinking, believing and living. And out of death comes a rebirth which is rich beyond our imagining. That's the positive side, and it is wonderful to see in ourselves, and other pilgrims. The apostle Paul writes: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). How fortunate we are to follow in the footsteps of Naaman and the magi.

2013 Annual Meeting: At the Annual Congregational Meeting held on November 17 the following Consistory members were elected: Hal Hauck, Elder; Rebecca Masters, Deacon and Kathy Maxwell Musialkiewicz, Deacon. Our gratitude to the three members who are leaving Consistory: Linda Dux, Diana Cline and Terry Gaffken. The Congregation also passed the 2014 Budget. If you were not able to attend and would like a copy of the written reports please contact the church office.



O Come, Let Us Adore Him

You and Your family are invited to join us to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in our **Christmas Eve Services, December 24:**

7:00pm - A service of Carols and Candles to welcome the Light that comes in the Christ Child

9:30pm - We celebrate His birth with a service of Carols, Candles, and Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Experience the Wonder in the beauty of the season as we join together in the sanctuary to welcome Him as the Babe of Bethlehem who comes to give us joy and peace, this night and all year long.

BIRTHDAYS

	December	Mary O'Dell	5	Bill Baldinger	28
Micaela Ryan	5, '96	Thomas Horvers	5	Lia Sumerano	28
Lauren Rubino	16, '97	Hal Hauck	6	Megan Christiana	28
Delaney Cox	17, '97	Caitlin Decker	7	Frieda Constant	29
Brian Rafferty	22, '95	Joyce Ann Leverenz	7	Dawn O'Brien	29
Avery Herzog	24, '95	Brent Jordan	11	Florence Prehn	29
Jada Nekos	30, '08	William Rockwell	11	Judy Horvers	30
Daniel Waligurski	31, '97	Renee Nekos	11	David Szekeres	30
Coty Burgess	2	Rich Little	11	Alyson Rafferty	31
Toni Hedges	2	Jennifer Mayfield	14		
Pat Baker	4	Linda Moon	16	ANNIVERSARIES	December
Susan Hutton	4	Jamie Hopper	20	Nancy & Rick Salzmann	15
		Mary Lou Vogt	20	Barbara & Jim Mayfield	19
		Kathleen Pfeiffer	23	Steve & Kristen Helm	21
		Don Kent	25	Clarence & Faye Jansen	27
		Jim Prentice	27		



Women's Guild

The pecans have arrived. If you haven't already picked yours up you can do so after church or if you didn't place an order, fear not as we ordered a few extra. Please see Jean Dussol to purchase your plain, cinnamon or chocolate covered pecans at the low, low price of \$9 for a one pound bag. They make great stocking stuffers!

Thank you to everyone who baked or purchased a baked good item during the Election Day Dinner. We appreciate your help and support!

Operation Christmas Child a huge success. Thank you to Sandie Gregory for chairing this wonderful event. What a way to get the holidays started. Please see separate article for more details on this project.

Cookie Walk time is just around the corner. This will be held Dec. 15, right after church. When you come into the hall during coffee hour pick up an empty cookie box and go down the tables and the ladies will

be happy to fill your box with your selections. We have hundreds of cookies and we always sell out so hurry out of church before your favorites are all gone. This fund raiser wouldn't be possible without all of our bakers. Thank you to everyone that bakes year after year for us.

We welcome and invite all women of the church to be a part of the Women's Guild. You don't have to be a member of the church. We meet right after church in the Dutch Room. So, come and see what we are all about.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year,
Sandy Emrich - President



Upcoming Events:

- 12/14/13 Setup for the Cookie Walk
- 12/15/13 Cookie Walk
- 3/9/14 Meeting
- 3/23/14 Annual Church Birthday Party

HANDICAP ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT

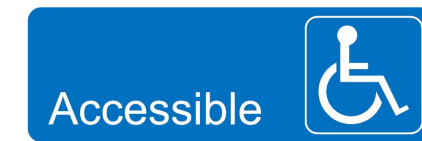
Action was taken at the 2012 annual meeting to authorize the fund-raising the necessary monies to undergo renovations to make our church property accessible to individuals with disabilities. The projected costs were estimated to be \$80,000 to \$100,000.

Scope of the work was:

- Lift to reach 3 levels of Schade-wald Hall;
- ADA compliant unisex restroom; and,
- Related additional work associated with the first two items.

The expected completion date was a goal of September, 2013. As with any typical renovation project, unforeseen work needed to considered and undertaken.

The campaign to raise the monies needed was immediately started. Contributions soon exceeded the



goal. Widespread giving from our congregants, community groups and individuals stepped to the forefront. Every single donation was from your heart and received by the Consistory with heartfelt gratitude. The recognition of the needs of disabled individuals, and the joy of giving was graphically demonstrated by the project components. Grants were applied for and Ulster Savings Bank awarded the church \$7,500 for which we are most grateful.

Donations came from every direction. Most of the groups that use our facilities donated funds to the level of their financial capability. Some of our gifts came from individuals who worked on the project as well as outside groups in their recognition of the value of our endeavor.

All donations combined provided us the funding to complete the ADA goals.

We are not going to announce the names of each donor; however, there were two very large gifts which allowed us to bring to fruition the completed project in the manner that addressed all of our hopes. The high level of donations allowed the Consistory to accomplish this endeavor without reducing any of our current investments.

The monies accepted to-date amounts to \$114,000+ with additional funds being offered.

The congregation approved two dedicated funds using unspent ADA funds. The congregation established an ADA dedicated account for annual upkeep for the lift and wireless headsets for individuals wanting improved audio during the service. The remaining monies were placed into a dedicated capital fund for future renovations.

~Dave Giles



Youth Group continues to meet the first and third Sundays of the month. We have had a bike ride on the Hurley Rail Trail, made pumpkin pies for the 5 families we are providing Thanksgiving dinner for and have had lots of fun! Our schedule continues to be busy. In December we will be caroling through Hurley. We would

love to have people come hear us so come to Hurley on **December 13th at 7 p.m.** Feel free to tag along also! After caroling we will be enjoying hot cocoa at Doc. Bob's and then the kids will be sleeping over at the Church and enjoying a big breakfast on Saturday. The Christmas Pageant will be on Dec. 22 at 11 a.m. We will also be caroling at Golden Hill that afternoon. Stay tuned for information on the Penny Social and Brooks BBQ in the spring!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!





Holiday Open House

AT THE PARSONAGE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8,

2:00 – 6:00pm

PLEASE COME AND SHARE A

bit of EGGNOG

AND fellowship

Hurley Reformed Church Queens Galley Donations Tree

Please TAKE A TAG & SHOP

Please don't wrap the item, we will do that.

Please attach the tag to your item
and place it under the tree.

All donations are requested
under the tree by **12/18/13.**

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!



Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to everyone who participated by filling the Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes. A special thank you to the Youth Group, who helped the younger children place their shoeboxes on the Altar and to the Women's Guild who helped to fill the void for shipping charges. We distributed 100 shoeboxes and 93 were filled to the brim. I can only imagine the joy on the faces and in the hearts of the 93 children who receive these boxes packed with love.

Thank you again and may each of you have a Blessed Christmas!!



The 2014 Offering Envelopes are now available for pick up. If you haven't used the envelopes in the past, but would like a box, just let us know or stop by the office. Using the weekly envelopes provides a convenient way to keep your offering up-to-date. In addition to an envelope for your weekly offering, the box also contains envelopes designated for specific budget items. These include a Missions Envelope to support our local missions. There is also a monthly Property and Maintenance Envelope, which goes directly to the costs of maintenance and repair projects for the church and parsonage. The Property and Maintenance Committee, chaired Jim Pirro, does an outstanding job staying on top of these projects, but with our old buildings, there is always work to be done, and the Property and Maintenance Envelopes help cover the costs.

The box also contains monthly envelopes for your Classis Dues. The Hurley Reformed Church is a member of the Mid-Hudson Classis, which consists of about thirty RCA congregations in this geographic area. The classis has jurisdiction over all matters relating to the work and welfare of the church within its geographic bounds. The finances to support this work are shared among the member congregations. Each year we are assessed an annual denominational financial responsibility, or Classis Dues, based on the number of church members. Our Classis Dues for 2014 are \$18,568.53, which comes out to \$99.30 per adult member (Note: This is \$99.30 per member, not per family, but students are not included). Your classis dues can be paid in full or in installments. The monthly "Classis Dues" envelope in your box will spread the cost out over the year (\$8.28/member/month). If you do not use envelopes, you can simply make your contribution by check (or cash) and designate it for "Classis Dues." We typically collect less than \$8,000 of the total Classis Dues each year from our members, so must pay out over \$10,000 from our general funds to meet this responsibility, and we would encourage you to help us meet this obligation.

Jim Mayfield, Finance Chair

It's That Time Again!!!

Once again it's time to place your orders for poinsettia plants to adorn the sanctuary for the Holiday season.



Plants are one size, one color, and one price: red at \$10.00 each.

POINSETTIAS

Number of plants: _____ @ \$10.00 each

_____ Total due

Name: _____

Phone: _____

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

We are requesting that you take your plant home or deliver it to someone special.

Make Checks Payable to: HRC Women's Guild

Give to Shirley Ruth after worship or mail to:

215 Grandview Terrace, Hurley NY 12443

Payment must be received by December 8, 2013



admin@hurleyreformedchurch.org, Hurley Reformed Church, US Holidays

Dec 2013 (Eastern Time)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 10am - Worship @ 11am - Prayer Chain 1pm - Private Party 7pm - Youth Group	2 5pm - Dog Training 7pm - Little League 7:30pm - 1st Capitol 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	3 9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 4:30pm - PC 101 @ 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	4 7:30am - Bible 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 6:30pm - Girl Scout 7pm - Boy Scouts 7pm - Men's Group 7:45pm - Bagpiper	5 9:30am - Badminton 1:30pm - Hurley 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7:30pm - Choir	6 2pm - Soccer	7
8 10am - Worship @ 11am - Women's 2pm - Open House @	9 11am - Basket Class 11am - VFW @ 5pm - Dog Training 7pm - Consistory @ 7pm - Hudson Valley 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	10 8:30am - Hillside 9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	11 7:30am - Bible 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 7pm - Local 1582 @ 7pm - Men's Group 7:45pm - Bagpiper	12 9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 6:30pm - Order of 7pm - Order of the 7pm - Men's Group 7:30pm - Choir	13 6pm - Youth Group	14 9am - Cookie Walk 10am - Genealogy @
15 10am - Worship @ 11am - Cookie Walk 7pm - Youth Group	16 10am - Genealogy @ 5pm - Dog Training 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	17 9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	18 7:30am - Bible 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 7pm - Hurley Lions 7pm - Men's Group 7:45pm - Bagpiper	19 9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7pm - NE 7:30pm - Choir	20 9am - HNS @ Hall 10am - Pageant	21
22 10am - Worship @ 11:15am - Pageant	23 10:30am - Genealog 5pm - Dog Training 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	24 Christmas Eve 7pm - Candlelight 9:30pm - Communion	25 Christmas	26 9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7:30pm - Choir	27	28
29 10am - Worship @	30 5pm - Dog Training 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	31 New Year's Eve	1	2		

December 2013



HURLEY REFORMED
CHURCH

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The Rev. Dr. Robert L. Gram, LCSW
Pastor

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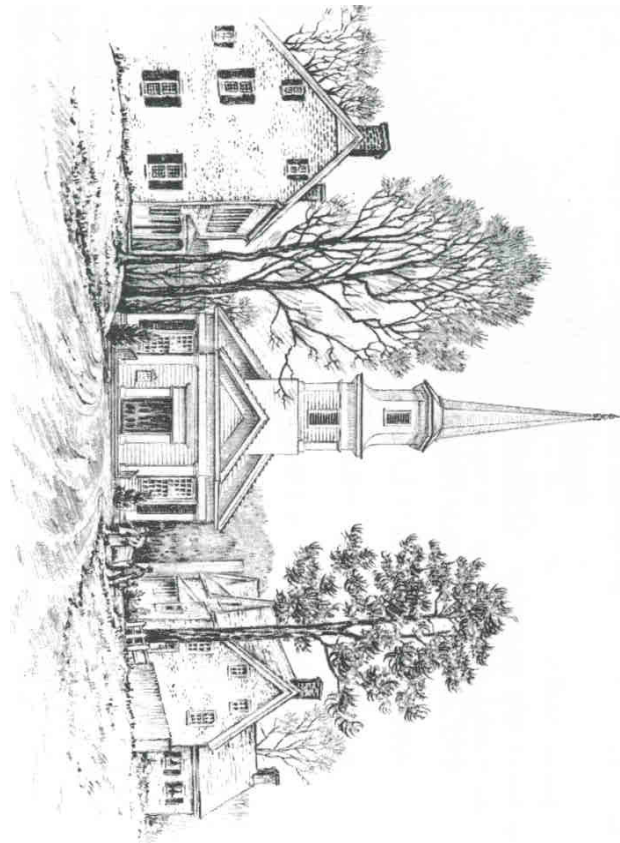
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MERRY
CHRISTMAS



HURLEY REFORMED CHURCH

Hurley New York 12443

The Rev. Dr. Robert L. Gram, LCSW
Pastor

THE SPIRE
DECEMBER 2013