

HURLEY REFORMED CHURCH

# THE SPIRE

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2014



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This month I begin a four part series at the Kingston Library entitled: “American Crucible: Theology and the Civil War.” I became interested in the subject three years ago when I visited Gettysburg for the first time, and had opportunity to walk the ill fated route of Pickett’s Confederate charge from Seminary to Cemetery Ridge which was met by stalwart Union Troops. Although the butternut colored soldiers, under the command of General Robert E. Lee, managed to breach the Blue defenders at a place known as the Angle, they were nevertheless repulsed and forced to retreat. The Confederacy sustained more than 12,000 casualties that afternoon, on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1863, thus ending the South’s drive to bring a sustained war to northern soil.

When scholars examine southern diaries of the time, as well as confederate military reports after Gettysburg, --where the casualty count exceeded 52,000-- they understand the pessimism which gripped the South. Many Confederate pundits understood that they could never win the War. Months later, on the Western theater, Confederate General

Braxton Bragg would rout the Yankees in northwestern Georgia, by a creek named Chickamauga, in which the combined casualty toll reached a staggering 34,500, second only to Gettysburg in the number of dead, wounded, and missing. Nevertheless Confederate hopes for a second victory, capitalizing on the first, were dashed the following month, when the tide of battle turned against the Chickamauga, victors, and their siege of Chattanooga was shattered by Union forces led by General Ulysses S. Grant. Thus Gettysburg served as a high-water mark for Union forces—there would be defeats in the future, but the terrible punch of the Confederates was drained after the carnage at this small Pennsylvania village.

My lecture series will focus on theological themes which braid the terrible events of that dark period between 1861—1865. One of the topics I’ll address is the issue of God’s favorite nation. Both the North and the South claimed that God fought on its side against the demonic infidels across the Potomac River. Northerners believed that God would win the victory because of the immorality of slavery. This was not the only issue, but it certainly

drove northern theologians to view the rupture which began in 1861 as a holy war against this new formed nation of slaveholders. The buying and trading of other humans had been outlawed by the English earlier on, and it was thought that God would damn these slaveholding states for their immoral behavior.

*After Fort Sumter, a Charleston lawyer was heard to say that he doubted more than a coffee cup of blood would be spilled in a war in which God maintained the southern reins.*

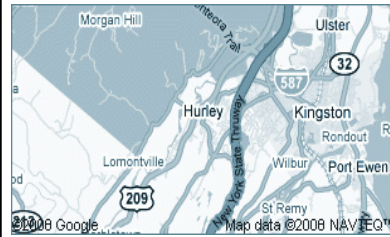
In the South theologians de-claimed that slavery was biblically mandated. One sees it in the New Testament as well as the Old, they noted. It was a short step for southern ministers to preach that the Confederacy carried forth a biblical mandate. Certain abolitionists stated that if the Bible condoned slavery, then the Bible itself was invalid, and

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should be tossed into the trash. The abolitionists, however, were far from being the best theologians. More careful biblical scholars stressed that biblical slavery was far different from the practice exercised by the South. In other words, the South practiced an inhuman form of bondage—to wit the separation of slaves from their families, degrading work conditions, as well as the inability of slaves ever to rise above their status—which was far different from more ‘ethical’ forms depicted not only in ancient Israel, but in the greater Roman Empire itself. Perhaps the strongest card in the northern hand was that slavery in the South was based on a particular race alone—something which Scripture does not admit. The South countered northern charges by noting that, although abuse did occur, most slave owners were highly ethical and treated slaves as part of their family. It is interesting that at the start of the Civil War many southern statesmen advocated literacy programs for slaves as well as other ameliorative options, as if to justify slaveholding as a good and decent thing for people who were nevertheless considered their racial inferiors.

Both sides thought that God was on the side of the country who won battles, and subsequently the war. It is amazing how quickly ministers in both North and South used their pulpits to promote war as a holy



## Local Missions

Linda Dux, Outgoing Chair

Jayne Ulrich, is a lifetime member of the Hurley Reformed Church and recent graduate of Penn State University (May 2013). During her time at Penn State, Jayne was actively involved with the Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon (also affectionately known as THON). THON is a year-long campaign to raise funds to help families fighting pediatric cancer; it is also the largest student-run philanthropic organization in the world.

THON's sole beneficiary, the Four Diamonds Fund, supports families undergoing pediatric cancer treatment at the Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital. This effort culminates in an annual 46-hour, no-sleeping, no-sitting dance marathon, which students, fund-raisers, and the families and children battling cancer attend to celebrate life and the fight to find a cure. At the end of the 46 hours, the THON student organizers reveal the total amount of funds raised for the year. THON 2014 will take place from February 21st-23rd, 2014 at Penn State's Bryce Jordan Center.

As an alumna, Jayne has committed to run in two events to help raise money to benefit THON and children battling pediatric cancer. On November 17th, she completed the Philadelphia Half Marathon with a team of runners from "Cents of Hope." The runners started the marathon in last place and raised money for every runner they passed. In total, the Cents of Hope team raised over \$10,000. Jayne also volunteered for and was selected as a finalist to run for the Hope Express. She will participate with a team of relay runners, including nine family members from Four Diamonds. Together they will run a 24-hour, 135-mile relay from Hershey Children's Medical Center across the mountains of Pennsylvania to the Penn State campus in State College to deliver letters from pediatric cancer patients to share with THON.

Our January Mission offerings will support Jayne's fundraising efforts.

event, instituted by God in which the infidels must and would be destroyed. If God was on the side of might, then everything was fine until battles were lost. This was an acute problem particularly in the South. In the beginning, the firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor as

well as the first victory at Bull Run indicated that the South would win handily, and, judging by these two events, rather bloodlessly. After Fort Sumter, a Charleston lawyer was heard to say that he doubted more than a coffee cup of blood

(Continued on page 4)

**S T I C K L E Y  
G A R D E N S**

*Happy New Year!*

We hope you all had a wonderful holiday!

Winter has arrived and another year has passed ... the columbarium committee has been busy as you can see with all the improvements that have taken place in 2013.

The peace and quiet experienced when walking through the gate and visiting Stickley Gardens is very comforting.

We look forward to yet another year of improvements and patiently await the gardens coming to life once again.

Come visit, even in winter, it is beautiful!

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)

**CLASSICS IN RELIGION: AMERICAN  
CRUCIBLE: CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY  
AND THE CIVIL WAR**

WEDNESDAYS, JANUARY 8, 15, 22, & 29 FROM  
10:30 AM TO 11:30 AM, KINGSTON LIBRARY

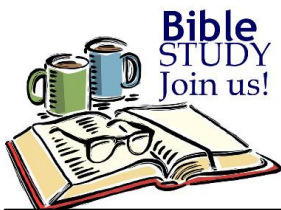
Was there any religious meaning to the carnage of the American Civil War (1861-1865)? This series of readings and discussions will focus on theological attempts to interpret, if not survive, the actions on the battlefield and in political disputes. How did theologians and pastors address the issues of slavery, and states' rights in light of the unimaginable loss of life on battlefields? The reading group will also focus on the religious underpinnings through funeral practices and popular literature. The Rev. Dr. Robert Gram, pastor of the Hurley Reformed Church, will lead the sessions. For more information, email [aahlstrom@hvc.rr.com](mailto:aahlstrom@hvc.rr.com) or 845-334-8404.

*Thanks to all your recycling*

...our cans and bottles program netted \$120.00 for the Mental Health Association in Ulster County for the second half of 2013.

Thank you again for your support.

Terry Gaffken



**Bible  
STUDY**  
Join us!

Meeting Weekly:

Tuesdays at 7:00pm

Wednesdays at 7:30am

in the Dutch Room.

**O**rdination and Installation of 2014 Consistory will take place on Sunday, Jan. 12, during worship. Hal Hauck will be ordained as an elder, and Rebecca Masters and Kathleen Musialkiewicz as deacons. Please keep them in your prayers as they attend to the work of the Lord.

**Church Photo Directory**



Yes, it's coming . . . We should have our completed Directory by February or March of 2014.

We will let you know as soon as they arrive.

~Deborah Tucker, Chair

*(Continued from page 2)*

would be spilled in a war in which God maintained the southern reins. Such an attitude changed as battles were lost, and the death count rose dramatically. It is estimated that the Civil War produced more than 620,000 casualties. Recent scholarship indicates the death toll goes much higher.

When, for example, Gettysburg was lost, southern theologians as well as the man and woman in the street sought scapegoats. God was still on the side of the confederacy, but God was angry at the immorality among soldiers. Thus an amazing amount of religious literature flooded soldiers' camps, and revival meetings were ongoing behind the lines. When battles continued to be lost, southern theologians, joined by the religious

press, attacked the civilian population, claiming that their immorality despoiled the now upright Christian soldier. As the end of the Confederacy loomed, theologians could only speak of God's mysterious nature which escapes comprehension. The once buoyant Christian hope transmogrified into a fatalism in which the motives of God were inscrutable—and cruel.

While North and South both claimed God's allegiance, President Lincoln understood the dilemma. Could God be on the side of both? In his Second Inaugural Address, there is a simple sentence which casts light on his thinking: "And the war came." He doesn't indict the Union or Confederacy, nor does he claim that God's preference resides with the victor. One infers rather that God may not be on either side, and that the war

was an event without God. It simply occurred, and it was terrible as all wars, indeed, are. Lincoln's simple declarative reminds me of the Apostle Paul. When he writes about terrible events he notes, "that we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). There is an indefinable evil out there which goes beyond, and magnifies human intent. Perhaps that's a start to help us understand that terrible war which occurred 150 years ago.

Yours in Christ,  
Doc Bob

***BIRTHDAYS***

	<b>JANUARY</b>
Ryan Helm	28, '09
Nicole Provenzano	4
Thomas Horvers	5
Carla Paton	8
Joe Ulrich	9
Marcy Rell	10
Allan Dumas	11
Dolores Wyncoop	12
MaryLou Christiana	12
Clarence Jansen	13
Doug Constant	15
Glenn Decker	17

Wally Cook	17
Linda Dux	18
Lee Gable	18
Wendy Helsley	19
Brandon Paton	20
Shannon Tucker	21
Michael Christiana	21
Alex Milne	22
Alma Strickland	24
Doris Alden	24
Kelly Maggiore	24
Sheila Jansen	25
Morgan Burgess	26
Tom Harkin	27
Doreen Lyke	28

	<b>FEBRUARY</b>
Mitchell Kurtz	30
Douglas Woodard	6, '92
Morgan Schaffrick	7, '96
Chris Decker	2
Dean Baker	2
Drew Wonderly	3
Robert Kindt, Sr.	4

***ANNIVERSARIES***

	<b>JANUARY</b>
Rev & Esther Stickley	2
George & Renee Nekos	4
Ruth & Tom Harkin	6

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

Jan 2014 (Eastern Time)

# January 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

10am - Worship @ 11am - Women's 2pm - Private @ Hall 7pm - Youth Group	5pm - Dog Training 7pm - Little League 7:30pm - 1st Capitol 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 4:30pm - PC 101 @ 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	7:30am - Bible 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 7pm - Men's Group 7:45pm - Bagpiper	9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 6:30pm - Order of 7pm - Order of the 7:30pm - Choir	9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7:30pm - Choir	9am - Dog Training 10am - Genealogy @ 12pm - Order of the
Ordination & 10am - Worship @ 1pm - Private @ Hall	11am - VFW @ 5pm - Dog Training 6pm - HVFYH @ 7pm - Consistory @ 7pm - Hudson Valley 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	8:30am - Hillside 9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	7:30am - Bible 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 7pm - Hurley Lions 7pm - Men's Group 7:45pm - Bagpiper	9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7pm - NE 7:30pm - Choir	9am - Consistory	
10am - Worship @ 7pm - Youth Group	Martin Luther King. 10am - Genealogy @ 5pm - Dog Training 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	7:30am - Bible 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 7pm - Men's Group 7:45pm - Bagpiper	9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7:30pm - Choir		
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HURLEY REFORMED  
CHURCH

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

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Pastor

The Rev. Dr. Robert L. Gram, LCSW

Hurley New York 12443

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