

THE SPIRE

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2016



Pilgrimage

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Grant, administered by Christian Theological Seminary of Indianapolis, is designed for congregations as well as pastors. In other words part of my proposal was to develop themes related to my sabbatical which had tie-ins to what I'll be doing next summer. The Grant Committee wants to see how themes relate to practical application in the life of the parish. In a sense the grantee is the church as well as the pastor. To this end a small group of leaders from our fellowship have been imagining operational handles and programs which complement what I will be doing in my three month absence from you.

There are two focuses to congregational activity. The first is greater understanding of Christian pilgrimage as it has been practiced throughout Christian history. We remember the Israelites, freed from slavery under Pharaoh because of the great acts of our liberating God, wandered in the desert for forty years. In recapitulating his people's past, Jesus himself was driven into the wilderness of Judea, an area most likely around what is now the Dead Sea, to be tempted by Satan, much as his predecessors were tempted in the desert of Sinai more than a thousand years earlier. Unlike his liberated forebears, however, Jesus did not yield to demonic enticement, thus ful-

filling the destiny of his once fallen people.

Throughout Christian history followers have made pilgrimages into desert areas in imitation of Christ. The earliest monks left Rome in the Second, Third, and Fourth Centuries to live hermit lives of simplicity, and austerity thus emulating John the Baptist as well as Jesus, both who cared little for wealth or the materialistic trappings which we saw in garish display during the Christmas season. I have been fortunate enough to spend time not only in the Egyptian desert, but also in Cappadocia, in central Turkey, where early Christians hollowed out caves in soft tufa-rock spires in order to practice a life focused solely on God. In the Middle Ages, many women and men traveled the Camino, or the way of St. James. Starting in France a Christian would walk this ancient pathway, crossing the Pyrenees Mountains, and collecting emblems from the various churches they passed along the way.

If you couldn't afford to spend months walking the sacred Camino, cathedrals offered pilgrims the opportunity to walk a labyrinth which was often painted in the naves of great cathedrals. The most famous, and indeed the most spectacular, is the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral. Maze walking means that the pilgrim follows a path of concentric circles or ovoid shaped

(Continued on page 2)

lines until he or she enters the center which becomes the heart of Christ's being, and, symbolically, the goal of life's journey. The path can be tricky and thus one walks slowly and meditatively, symbolizing that not only is faith a journey, but salvation is discovered in every step along the way. The maze also reminds us in a physical way that in spite of life's twists and turns, and yes, in spite of the fact that labyrinths illustrate the metaphorical idea that at times we frustratingly 'walk around in circles', as the children of Israel did literally, understanding that in spite of the twists and turns which reality flings at us, we are in God's hands, and God will direct our paths, as Scripture time and again affirms. So the maze represents the importance of sanctifying our sacred journey through life as well as affirming that we are headed toward our personal and corporate center, Jesus Christ.

The second focus which will become operational is the issue of hospitality. The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews states: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." The New Testament writer refers probably to the messengers who Abraham and Sarah encounter who foretell that ancient Sarah will conceive a child (Genesis 18). There are many instances of hospitality in both Old and New Testaments. Perhaps the most important New Testament text is Matthew 25:35 when Jesus tells the disciples that, "I was a stranger, and you visited me". Jesus notes that whenever a disciple practices hospitality to a stranger or foreigner, essentially they're offering it to him. In the first three centuries of the Christian era, our faith exceeded all others in the ancient world in its desire to extend hospitality. Let's say you were a Christian living in Jerusalem in the second century, and you had to journey to Rome, and had little money to do so. Once you arrived at the center of the ancient world, friendless, and alone, you would seek out a door with the Christian sign of the fish, and be taken in without question. This is how strong the spirit of hospitality nestled in ancient Christian circles, and I believe it was one of the two or three most important reasons why Christianity gained more converts than competing religions.

As of Nov. 30, I have completed seven years of service at the Hurley Reformed Church. A personal goal of mine has always been to open up the parsonage to celebrations of all sorts, in part, to increase our understanding and appreciation of hospitality. As someone who loves to cook and to eat, this is congruent with who I am, and who God calls me to be, so that as tiring as parsonage parties may be, I always experience a sense of joy when the social hubbub grows in decibels around the dining room and kitchen.. The purpose of the sabbatical is that the ancient gift of practicing hospitality will ramify into your homes, and that you will allow that spirit of hospitality to filter more deeply into our shared church experience. In this contemporary period, the issue of hospitality also reaches beyond our local congregation. What should hospitality on our part mean to the Syrian refugee, and all those children who barely make it from Turkey to Greece in overcrowded and leaky rafts, 'protected' from drowning only often by flimsy toy inner tubes rather than life jackets? Last month we remembered that Jesus was a refugee as an infant, and that he and his parents had to flee to Egypt to escape the murderous wrath of Herod the Great. Herod and that contemporary monster, Syrian dictator Assad, have much in common (both I believe, perhaps, uncharitably, will occupy bunk beds in the nether regions of hell someday). As Christians we are called to protect the victims of barbarism just as Joseph and Mary protected their son from the depredations of Herod the Great. What must we do? I've preached about Jesus as a refugee, and our Christmas Pageant illustrated that theme. It is my hope that the Hurley Reformed Church has something to say and do in the midst of our present humanitarian crisis.

So let me give you a list of upcoming programs, Bible Studies and Seminars which focus on pilgrimage and hospitality both before and after my time away from you next summer (See following pages).

In Christ,

Doc Bob

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Clergy Renewal

PRE CLERGY RENEWAL

Sunday, January 31st “HOSPITALITY LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY “ 12:00-2:30 Parsonage. Rev. Kent Busman will lead a discussion on the issue of hospitality, and how it affects local and global perspectives. What must we do to become more hospitable? Rev. Kent Busman has led seminars and retreats in the area of hospitality. He is currently the Director of Camp Fowler, an RCA retreat center located in the Adirondacks.

Tuesday Evening Bible Study: **JANUARY 26, Feb. 2, 9** THE FIRST PILGRIMAGE: A STUDY OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT 7-8:30 Dr. Gram will focus on select chapters in book of Exodus, and how they are relevant to our own pilgrimages through tough times.

Sunday, February 21 “WALKING THE CAMINO: SPIRITUAL GROWTH ON THE ANCIENT SPIRITUAL ROAD OF SAINT JAMES” 12-2:30 Parsonage Rev. James Alley will lead the discussion of his personal journey as he and his wife, Joan, walked the pilgrim's path for 8 weeks. He will show slides of his journey, and how we might consider such a pilgrimage (2017?) in the future. Rev. Alley received his B.A. From Princeton University, his M.A. From Brown University, and his Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is recently retired after serving the Kaatsbaan and Blue Mountain Reformed Churches.

Tuesday Evening Bible Study: **March 1, 8, 15** “A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE: FROM THE EGYPTIAN DESERT TO LABYRINTH WALKING IN SAN FRANCISCO” 7-8:30 pm. Dutch Room. Doc Bob will discuss the beginnings of the idea of pilgrimage as it was practiced by the earliest desert monks in Central Turkey as well as in Egypt. The course will also focus on the first pilgrim to the Holy Land, Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, who traveled from Rome to Jerusalem in the fourth Century, and pilgrimages, particularly in the Middle Ages which helped and defined our modern understanding of its importance. Finally we'll examine the concept of the Labyrinth and how the idea of meditative walking through a maze strengthened the faith of those who could not financially go on a pilgrimage.

WALKING A LABYRINTH. March 20-26 Times to be Announced. Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday, March 20, and ends on Holy Saturday, March, 26th. We will either construct, or paint our own labyrinth or rent one so that there will be time in which you can walk a labyrinth as many pilgrims did especially during Holy Week. It will be located in Schadewald Hall.

DEVELOPING A WILDERNES SPIRITUALITY MINDSET AS WE HIKE UPWARD! This year, Thursday, May 5, marks the Ascension of the Lord day, celebrated by churches around the world. On the following **Saturday, May 7**, we will spend the day ascending a Catskill peak accompanied with readings and discussion of pilgrimage along the upward way. We will meet in the parking lot at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch for yourself, and cookie to share with someone else! (Rain Date: Saturday, May 12).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Clergy Renewal

POST CLERGY RENEWAL

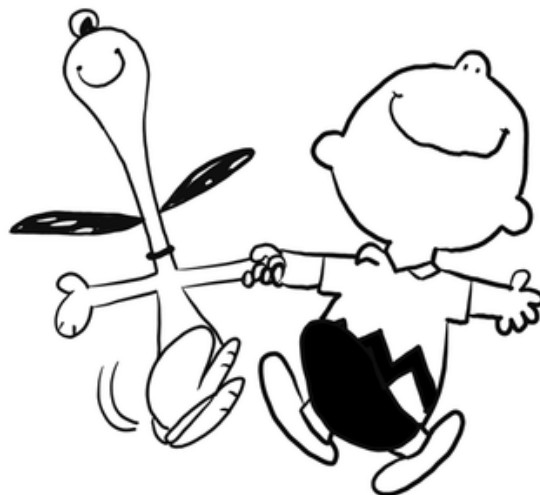
WELCOME BACK CELEBRATION (To Be Announced)

Tuesday, September 20, 7:00-8:30 pm, Dutch Room. **JOURNALING YOUR OWN PILGRIMAGE** Doc Bob will be writing about his experiences as he bicycles cross country, and will share how you can write about your own personal, and sacred journey. He will be happy to work with prospective authors after class.

PARSONAGE OPEN HOUSE Sunday October 2. 2-6 pm Doc Bob will cook, using recipes he learned at the Stone Wall Cooking school this summer on Sabbatical. Bring Your Appetite! Also a slide presentation of Doc Bob's cross country journey will be shown..

PLAY "OUTWARD BOUND" BY SUTTON VANE performances Thursday-Sunday November 3-6 This will be the inaugural production of the Hurley Church Players. "Outward Bound" was first performed in London in 1923. The narrative concerns the idea of a pilgrimage by boat and what the characters understand about the ups and downs of life's journey. Doc Bob will direct.

There may be more activities or development of ongoing programs and/or missions which derive from our calendar offerings. I believe it will be a wonderfully exciting year for our fellowship. Stay tuned!





Happy New Year from the Mission committee!

In November, we collected for The Clinton Avenue warming shelter, so they have funds at the beginning of the winter season. We were also able to collect lots of socks (100 + pair) for the Clinton Avenue warming Shelter to distribute.

Our December collection was for the Samaritan's Purse Refugee efforts. These volunteers are often the first Christians some of these folks have met. What a wonderful way to show what Christianity is about!

In January, we will be collecting for the Deacon's Fund which goes directly towards unexpected and one time needs in our immediate community.

The committee includes Linda Caddy, Kathy Jansen, Cindy Sumerano and Debbie Tucker. Thank you to those of you who have suggested other places to give. We will continue to pursue other opportunities for giving, so let one of us know if you have any suggestions or if you'd like to assist in the committee.

Rebecca Masters

Happy New Year!
Blessings to all for 2016!

THE STICKLEY GARDENS COLUMBARIUM COMMITTEE

STICKLEY GARDENS

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)
 JIM CRAVEN, CONSISTORY LIAISON
 REV STICKLEY, SECRETARY

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



January

BIRTHDAYS

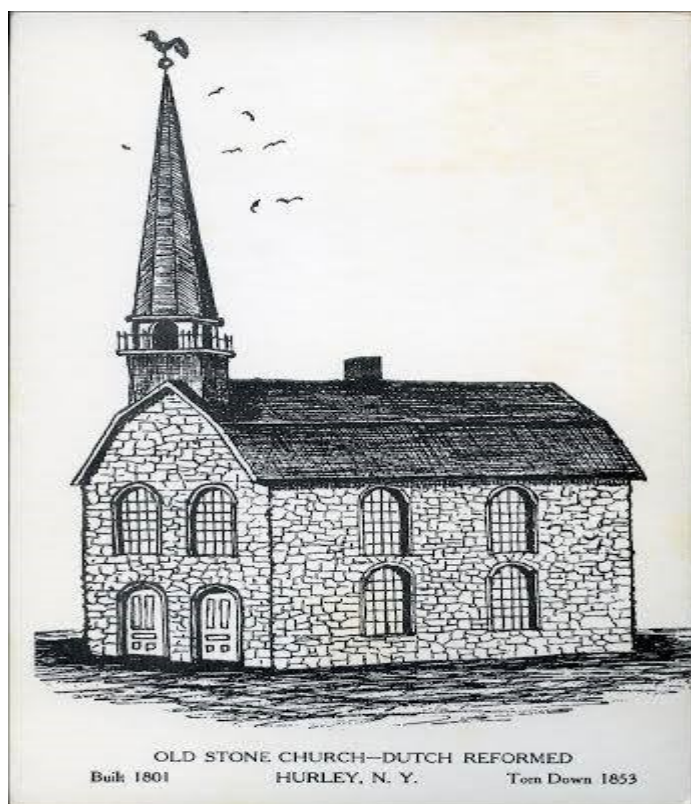
Nicole Provenzano	4
Thomas Horvers	5
Carla Paton	8
Joe Ulrich	9
Marcy Rell	10
Allan Dumas	11
Dolores Wyncoop	12
MaryLou Christiana	12
Clarence Jansen	13
Doug Constant	15
Glenn Decker	17

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

Ryan Helm	28
Mitchell Kurtz	30

ANNIVERSARIES

Rev & Esther Stickley	2
George & Renee Nekos	4
Ruth & Tom Harkin	6



OLD STONE CHURCH—DUTCH REFORMED
Built 1801 HURLEY, N. Y. Torn Down 1853

Church in Gingerbread

Alana Mayhon, owner of maad4cupcakes.com, created the two gingerbread churches for this year's Historic Ulster County in Gingerbread event at Ulster County Historical Society's Bevier House in Marletown. which took place on December 5 and 12. Alana, with the assistance of Dawn Palen, made gingerbread renditions of the Old Stone Church in Hurley, built in 1801 but torn down in 1853, and our current church, constructed in 1854 using some of the stones from the older building in our foundation..

These replicas were on display, along with a number of other historic Ulster County buildings, at the exhibit. If you missed the Gingerbread exhibition, come take a look at these amazingly detailed edifices. The old church even has the rooster on the steeple!.

You can see photos on our website:

News Bytes

Information you should know ; Opportunities for Fellowship.



Thank you to the Jordan Family and to Herzog's Home Improvement Center for the donation of the Christmas tree and the wreath on the outside of the Church.

Also, Thank you to Matt Sirni and Dave's Tree Service for installing the wreath.



Prayer Shawl Ministry update....

Some of our dedicated needle workers are starting to fill up a basket in the Narthex with "Prayer Squares".

Prayer squares, like the prayer shawls, are prayerfully knitted, crocheted, quilted, and embroidered by members of our congregation.

If you feel the need of some extra prayer energy, please take a prayer square to carry with you in your pocket.



Looking for good fellowship?!

The Men's Group meets the third Wednesday of the month. Next meeting is January 20 at 7 pm.

Come hang with us.

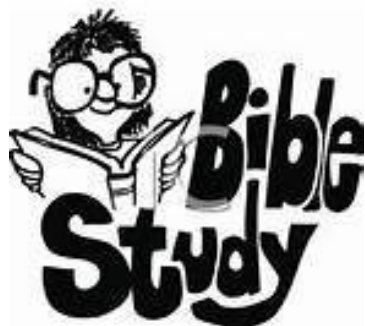
See Wally Cook for details.



Thank you to the "retiring" members of Consistory for their dedicated service to the Hurley Reformed Church. "Retiring" members are Jim Mayfield, Sonnie Howe and Christine Henning. They become members of Greater Consistory.

News Bytes

Information you should know ; Opportunities for Fellowship.



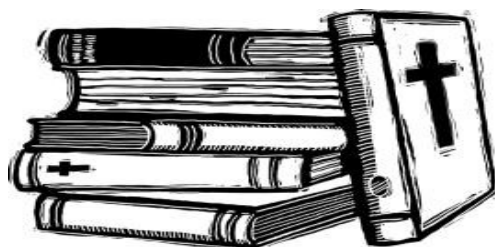
Tuesday Bible Study in January

January 19 **Criminal Christologies**, the Nazification of Jesus, Part 4

January 26, February 2 and 9: **The First Pilgrimage: A Study of the Exodus from Egypt**

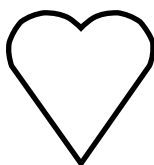


Congratulations to the new members of the Consistory. Ordination and Installation of new Elders and Deacons are during the January 10, 2016 worship service. The new elders are Kathleen Jansen and Barbara Kindt. The new deacon is Gregory Laib.



WOMEN'S Bible Study

The Women's Ministries Bible study group meets the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 1PM in the Dutch Room. Our continuing study is on the lives of women in the Bible and how their stories still speaks to us today. Light refreshments are served. For further information, call Nancy Sweeney at 336-5267 or e-mail her at sweeney.n11@gmail.com



Contacts, Hurley Reformed Church

January 2016

Jan 2016 (Eastern Time)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10am - Worship @ 11am - Prayer Chain @ 11am - SHD Committee @	3pm - Quilting @ Dutch 5pm - Dog Training @ Hall 7pm - Little League @ 7:30pm - Al-Anon @ Room	9:30am - Guild Quilters @ 9:30am - Badminton @ 11am - Balance for Life @ 4pm - Hurley Purlers @ 4:30pm - PC 101 @ Dutch 7pm - Bible Study @ Dutch 7pm - Boy Scouts Troop 20	7:30am - Bible Study @ 5:30pm - Dog Training @ 6pm - Cub Scout Den @ 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ Room 6:30pm - Girl Scout 7pm - Boy Scouts Troop 20 7pm - Kingston Area Soccer 7:45pm - Bagpiper Drum	9:30am - Badminton @ 1:30pm - Hurley Senior 4:45pm - Dog Training @ 7pm - Sisters in Solution @ 7:30pm - 1st Capitol 7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @	New Year's Day	7pm - Motorcycle Club @ 10am - Genealogy @ Room 12pm - Order of Arrow
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Church Birthday Party @ 10am - Worship @ 3pm - daisy girl scout troop	11am - VFW @ Dutch Room 3pm - Quilting @ Dutch 5pm - Dog Training @ Hall 6pm - HVEFH INC @ Room 7pm - Consistory @ Dutch 7pm - Hudson Valley 7:30pm - Al-Anon @ Room	8:30am - Hillside Acres 9:30am - Guild Quilters @ 9:30am - Badminton @ 11am - Balance for Life @ 1pm - Women's Bible Study 4pm - Hurley Purlers @ 7pm - Bible Study @ Dutch 7pm - Boy Scouts Troop 20	7:30am - Bible Study @ 5:30pm - Dog Training @ 6pm - Cub Scout Den @ 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ Room 7pm - Local 1582 @ Room 9 7:45pm - Bagpiper Drum	9:30am - Badminton @ 4:45pm - Dog Training @ 7pm - Sisters in Solution @ 7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
10am - Worship @ 11am - Women's Ministry @	10am - Genealogy @ Rooms 3pm - Quilting @ Dutch 5pm - Dog Training @ Hall 7:30pm - Al-Anon @ Room	9:30am - Guild Quilters @ 9:30am - Badminton @ 11am - Balance for Life @ 4pm - Hurley Purlers @ 6pm - nursery school board 7pm - Bible Study @ Dutch 7pm - Boy Scouts Troop 20	7:30am - Bible Study @ 5:30pm - Dog Training @ 6pm - Cub Scout Den @ 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ Room 7pm - Hurley Lions @ Dutch 7pm - men's group @ Dutch 7:45pm - Bagpiper Drum	9:30am - Badminton @ 4:45pm - Dog Training @ 7pm - NE WoodWorkers @ 7pm - Sisters in Solution @ 7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @	12pm - Constant Baby	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
10am - Worship @ 3pm - daisy girl scout troop	10:30am - Genealogy @ 3pm - Quilting @ Dutch 5pm - Dog Training @ Hall 7:30pm - Al-Anon @ Room	9:30am - Guild Quilters @ 9:30am - Badminton @ 11am - Balance for Life @ 1pm - Women's Bible Study 4pm - Hurley Purlers @ 7pm - Bible Study @ Dutch 7pm - Boy Scouts Troop 20	7:30am - Bible Study @ 5:30pm - Dog Training @ 6pm - Cub Scout Den @ 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ Room 7:45pm - Bagpiper Drum	9:30am - Badminton @ 4:45pm - Dog Training @ 7pm - Hurley Heritage 7pm - Sisters in Solution @ 7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @		
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
10am - Worship @						

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

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