

# Kingston's Old Dutch Church celebrates 350 years

## Speaker: Church touched by 'spirit of God'

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KINGSTON — As the birthplace of Christianity in the Hudson Valley marked its 350th anniversary Sunday, the Rev. Jon Norton in his sermon challenged those at the Old Dutch Church to think about what they were celebrating.

"Is there a deeper meaning ...?" asked the executive minister of the Reformed Church in America's New York Synod. "What is God doing here?"

The miracles of this church are many, he said, citing the outgrowth of 50 daughter churches and the survival of a building burned by the British in 1777. But the real miracle, Norton said, is that God is still in the Hudson Valley changing people's hearts.

God was in the pen of Steven Gates, a member of the church who composed "Pillar of Faith," an orchestral work to commemorate the anniversary. And in the brush of Howard Hopkins Jr., who struggled with a landscape painting of the stone church until he was inspired to finish it for the occasion. He began it as an inspirational work for his home; now it hangs in the entrance to the church hall.

"This is the Lord's painting," Hopkins said about why he donated it instead.

And God was on the mind of the church's pastor, the Rev. Ken Walsh, when he invited the community's Christian churches to come together and celebrate at the special service.

More than 200 people joined him for the Sunday afternoon service that was full of song and spirit.

"All of us, all of us are here because the spirit of God is in us," Norton said.

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