

Steeple Chimes

September 2020



From the Pastor's Study....

This morning, sitting on the porch of the parsonage while rain poured down, across the street I saw the neighbor's cat sitting on the stoop waiting for someone to open the door and let her come in. The neighbors don't have a porch. There isn't even a small entry roof for shelter. The cat's furry little body was getting wet as she waited. Still, she didn't meow loudly to get someone's attention. She didn't scratch at the door. She simply waited—listening and watching for someone to wake up and let her in.

It has been almost six months since the doors of our Church have been opened for worship on Sunday morning or to welcome our regular support groups and visitors to come inside. When we first shut down in mid-March, I expected we would be back together in just a few weeks. We have waited a long time! It is entirely contrary to our mission and identity to NOT have the doors of the Church open to our congregation and larger community. Our proclamation and our practice say: "God's Doors Are Open to All." We are social creatures. Our well-being depends on our being with each other to share our joys and our sorrows. Our isolation leads to depression and feelings of hopelessness. Our need for one another has been especially acute during these months as racial injustices are exposed and protests are taking place, and political tensions keep rising.

We have done our best to stay connected with phone calls, Zoom meetings, live-streamed worship, and small, socially distanced, masked gatherings. But there is no substitute for being together in our bodies. And we will be soon. **The doors of the Church will be open again on Sunday, September 13, 10:30 a.m. for our first gathered worship service in half a year.** We will follow all of the CDC guidelines for re-opening. We have extra masks and lots of hand sanitizer! I know that not everyone will be able to gather in the sanctuary. If you are physically vulnerable, feeling sick, or have recently visited a COVID hot spot, it is best that you stay home and join us by live-stream if you are able. We will continue to mail bulletins and sermons if you are shut-in. We will continue to call and Zoom.

And we will rest in the truth that through the Spirit, we are all gathered into God's own life, God's own self, and God's own purposes. God's purposes will not fail. I just stepped back out onto the porch to see if the cat was still sitting there and watched as the neighbor opened the door and let her come in from the rain. I'm relieved. I'm giving thanks. I'm remembering, God's heart is always a wide open door for every body.

Peace to you.... Pastor Renée

A Transition in Our Music Ministry Staffing....



In mid-August Russel Oliver completed his service as our organist-musician. Russel formally joined the Church staff in September 2018. For nearly two years he faithfully played for weekly services, choir rehearsals, weddings, funerals, and special musical ensembles. Russel also gave a stirring, costumed, Halloween concert in the fall of 2019. We are grateful for the gifts that Russel brought to his ministry—a gentle, compassionate spirit, a love for people, and a passion for organ music and playing. He also brought us Lucky, his patient, sweet canine companion who sometimes sang out in choir rehearsals and always welcomed every hug with a lick to the hugger's face. Sadly, not everyone was able to say goodbye to Russel and Lucky. We offer our thanks that Russel came into our lives at just the right time and we hope that, God-willing, Russel may still be with us to play the organ from time to time.

In mid-August the Consistory welcomed Bethany Pietroniro back to play piano for worship and musical ensembles. She was with us from December 2017 through June 2018 at which time she left to pursue her Ph.D. studies. Bethany returned to our area last year to teach at Bard College, making it possible for her to be with us again in our ministry of music through May 2021. Welcome back Bethany.

An Addition to our Ministry Staff....



It is with great joy and anticipation that the Consistory announces the appointment of Preaching Elder Rob Sweeney to the ministry staff of the Old Dutch Church. Rob will begin his full-time ministry as a Commissioned Pastor candidate on September 13, 2020.

Rob joined the Church in 2010. He was ordained as an Elder in 2011 and assumed responsibility for all of the Church's property, making vast improvements as rooms were cleared of clutter and prepared for the use of our congregation and larger community. In 2012, when Pastor Ken Walsh completed his ministry with Old Dutch, Rob chaired the Search Committee that articulated the Church's mission and vision and led to the calling of Pastor Renee. In 2015, having completed his Biblical and Theological studies in the School for Christian Living and Serving (a Classis school), Rob was commissioned as a Preaching Elder at Old Dutch and widened his role in our preaching and worship ministries. In 2018 he was appointed to be our part-time Minister for Property Stewardship, caring for buildings, working with Sextons Jean and Geoff, and also offering hospitality to the many groups and organizations who share our spaces.

All of this history testifies to the many ways in which Rob has been actively giving himself to the ministries of the Church for a decade. For years the Old Dutch Consistory has recognized the need to grow our ministry staff as we have been expanding our mission to welcome a greater number and diversity of persons, and to increase co-operation and partnerships with more groups, agencies, and organizations within our City and County. Much is being done, and much is being left undone! Opportunities for fuller ministry engagement and deepened partnerships abound for our whole congregation right now.

To aid us in embracing these opportunities, and to lighten the load on Pastor Renée, Consistory has called Rob Sweeney to serve with us full-time. Presently Rob is completing the last course needed prior to being examined and commissioned by the Mid-Hudson Classis (our regional assembly). Rob's primary responsibilities will be in property stewardship, hospitality, partnerships, and community outreach, and

An Addition to our Ministry Staff....cont.

in the stewardship of our history, museum, and archive (the Church has played a significant role in the history of this region and we host many tour groups and genealogists). Rob will share in pastoral care, preaching and worship, and provide support for publicity and the Church's social media presence.

We had planned to have a time for the whole congregation to talk with Rob before he began his full-time ministry at the Church. Unfortunately, COVID-19 interrupted this plan. When we are all once again able to gather, talk, and eat at leisure, that time will come! And, we do hope that in late 2020 or early 2021, we will have a special worship service with our Classis in which Rob officially will become our Commissioned Pastor. Until then, please join the Consistory in welcoming Rob as he begins his full-time servant ministry among us.

Organ Repairs Underway

For a number of years our Moeller organ—installed in 1852 when the sanctuary was built and subsequently expanded—has been in need of significant repairs to leathers, cracked wind chests, disabled foot pedals and stops, out-of-tune pipes, and the entire digital relay set up. Well, thanks to the generosity of Deacon Gilbert Plantinga who has donated and pledged close to \$160,000.00, these repairs are in process. The expected completion date is the end of October. Gilbert showed up at the Old Dutch Church on a Sunday in the summer of 2016 at one of our outdoor celebrations of the Lord's Supper. After years and years away from the church, a thoughtful atheist, Gilbert experienced God breaking into his life and went searching for a church to belong to. He was discerning whether to join a Lutheran or Reformed church. He was slightly inclined toward the Reformed tradition when he showed up that summer Sunday. But what really sealed the deal for Gilbert was our marvelous organ (and maybe that long conversation about God and life and death with the Pastor). Himself a jazz guitarist and former professor of music theory (presently writing a book on this topic) Gilbert found his church home with us. In gratitude to God and this community which has fully embraced him and called him to serve, Deacon Gilbert has made this wonderful gift to restore and preserve our grand old organ, to the glory of God and the great delight of all God's people who sing and listen to its complex, lovely sounds.

The Roof Project...



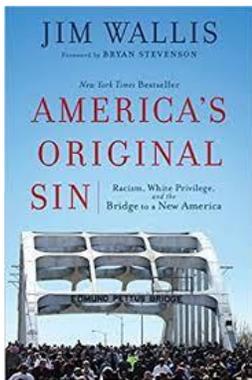
really is finished and it looks amazing! It was a long haul and it cost a lot of money—close on \$680,000.00. But thanks to a New York State preservation grant for \$400,000.00, special gifts from members of the congregation and friends of the Old Dutch Church, moneys from the RCA Church Growth Fund, and several years of cumulated interest income from our Fred Johnston Trust, we have been able to cover our cost for the project. In the end what we have is a beautifully restored, historically superb sanctuary exterior that will allow this “cathedral church” of Kingston to continue to offer wide welcome to all kinds of people, organizations, groups and events for years to come.

While the building was closed because of COVID-19, lots of interior work has also been done, including ceiling plaster repair and the painting of every pew! We had a fabulous outdoor celebration on Friday, August 7, 2020. Lara Hope and the Ark-tones, Josie Eriole and guitarist Rick Z, and Tibetan singer Yungchen Lhamo provided lively, funny, meditative music for the event. Our pianist, Bethany

The Roof Project...cont.

Pietroniro, played our new memorial carillon sending waves of marvelous sound forth from our newly restored steeple/bell tower. Radio Kingston was on-site for the whole evening with a live broadcast and interviews about the Church's history and present ministry of wide welcome and big, divine love. Lois Every, Jeanne Rakowski, Rob Sweeney, and Eddie Catuzzo plied 50+ Church members and guests with lovely food and drink aplenty. We are celebrating all of God's marvelous gifts to us and giving thanks for all of the people, past and present, who *have* offered and now offer themselves in service to God and neighbor through the Old Dutch Church.

Old Dutch Reading Group & Playing With the Word Bible Study



During the month of August a dozen folk from the Church read and many discussed Jim Wallis' book about racism, white privilege, and the hope for a new America. This book was chosen in the fall of 2019 to be our summer read in 2020. Nobody knew how very timely this reading and discussion would turn out to be. It was intense and good. The Group is in process of deciding what other books we will read this year and will resume discussions via Zoom in the month of October, Thursdays, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Stay tuned to hear what we'll be reading. Playing with the Word Bible Study will begin again on Tuesday, September 15, via Zoom, 7:00-8:30 p.m. The texts we will be playing with will be printed in the bulletin the Sunday before our Tuesday gatherings. Join us as you are able.



Our Food Pantry Is Full

Thank you to everyone who has donated food and money to keep our little pantry stocked. We got a great boost from the \$500.00 donation that came from one of our live-stream worship participants, who happens to be a close relative of one of our deacons. Food insecurity has increased for so many people because of COVID-19 and increased unemployment. We welcome your continued contributions to provide nourishment for our neighbors!



Special thanks to Elder Theron Haskins, Willow Kristin Harrington, George Heidcamp, and Deacon Jeanne Rakowski for offering God's Word through the witness of their lives in our August worship services. We were enormously blessed by your words and your courage in sharing the grace and wonder of your journey with God.

Looking Ahead...

Friday, September 11

Bard Sunset Serenade—Live Outdoor Concert,
Old Dutch Church, Main St. Entrance, 5:30 p.m.

November 20-21

Enneagram Workshop @ Old Dutch Church
begins 6 p.m. Friday; 9:00 a.m. – 4 p.m. Saturday
Book for pre-reading, *The Road Back to You* is available
in the Church Office.