



The Visitor

Schoharie Reformed Church

November 2020

Pastor Mike & Pastor Sherri



What's Inside

Pastors Message	1-2
Food Pantry	3
Devotionals	3
Church Letter	4
Day Camp 2021	5
Operation Christmas Child	5
Regional Synod	5
Schoharie Classis	6
Thanksgiving Baskets	6
Thank Yous	7
After School Program	7
Camp Fowler	8
Toasty Toes	8



Lifting Our Eyes to The Mountains

Photo Credit: Caleb Jacobus

*"I lift up my eyes to the mountains –
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth."*

-Psalm 121:1 NIV

In the book of the Psalms, Psalms 120-134 are known as the "Psalms of Assent." They were often used for people to recite while they made their way on pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem. They were prayers and songs for a journey. Something to help them focus on God as they made their way along the road.

While we haven't been going a lot of places over the past several months, life continues to take us all on a journey. Some of us have recently retired from fruitful careers and are experiencing life in a new way. Others of us have been on a journey with our health, or our employment, or with our growing and aging families. We have all been on a long and difficult journey through this pandemic; having had

to get used to new ways of learning at school, or at home, different ways of being together with others through screens, or distanced and with masks, different ways of experiencing church, without singing or coffee! We have all experienced change in some, if not most of the systems in which we are a part: different ways of working, getting groceries and needed household items, different routines in travel or not traveling. We are also all on a journey through this political season and have probably experienced within ourselves and with others some of the polarization, anxiety, and reactivity that has accompanied this journey that has been prevalent. What are some of the other realities that have been a part of your journey recently? How has all of this change impacted your faith? What changes are you experiencing as loss? What are you grieving? Is there anything you are celebrating? What are you learning about God and God's presence and about yourself during this pandemic?

Whatever our journeys have included, there are A LOT of areas that could become focal points. Our focus and attention can easily stay on our fears and our anxieties. We can get stuck in our shame. We can focus on what other people are doing (or not doing). We can focus on things that distract us as we try to avoid our feelings, or avoid difficult circumstances. We can focus on all that we feel like we have to do for everybody else on their journey. With so many potential areas of focus, unintentionally or intentionally, the ones we choose will have an impact on our journeys.

The Psalmists knew this especially well. As you take some time to read the Psalms (we strongly encourage you to!), you can see many of the things they were tempted to focus on in the midst of their journeys, from the fears of their enemies, to their lack of resources, to their worries about the future, along with many, many other things. Yet, through the process of lament and praise as the Psalmists honestly pour themselves out to God and then receive God's promises, the Psalmists refocus and re-frame their reality on the bigger reality of God.

The prayers of the Psalmists never sugar-coat anything, and they never adopt a "look on the bright side" sort of mentality that downplays or disregards reality. Rather, they choose to more deeply and truly face and live into their reality within the bigger reality of God.

We believe this is something that is essential for us to do as well, as followers of Jesus, and the people of God in the world today. We are in deep need for the good of the world to develop the practice of refocusing, and reframing our reality and our journey in the deeper reality of God. Rather than get sucked into all of the divisiveness of polarization and politicization that is so prevalent around us, we need the voice of the church and the people of God to continually point out and call us to the bigger reality of God! We are in desperate need of remembering to "Lift our eyes to the mountains" to remember where our help comes from!

This month we are going to spend some time reflecting on the Psalms. Through their hearts and voices we hope to rekindle our own hearts and voices to be able to point one another, and our world to the bigger reality of God's goodness and grace. This does not happen naturally, or with ease. It takes some intentional work on our parts to learn how to refocus and reshape our lives with gratitude, but the impact is profound blessing upon our lives, and our relationships for the glory of God and the good of our world!

Lifting our eyes to the mountains!

Pastors Sherri and Mike





Food Pantry



The Food Pantry continues to assist many families in the area. With the Thanksgiving holiday many families will be in need of holiday foods; stuffing, cranberry sauce, instant potatoes, applesauce, canned gravy/vegetables/yams. Other items needed include canned fruit, tuna fish, pasta, pasta sauce, canned ravioli/beef stew/soup/spaghetti o's/chili with beans; boxed macaroni & cheese, peanut butter, jelly, granola bars, cereal, jello packs, pudding packs, snack crackers. Special items of need are cleaning supplies, paper products-paper towels/toilet paper. Hand soap, toothpaste, shampoo and shower soaps are also needed. Items may be dropped off at SUPC on Tuesdays or Thursday from 12noon till 2:00pm or they may be left between the doors of the SUPC educational building. Donations may be left in the Narthex of SRC on Sunday mornings. Monetary donations are appreciated as well, checks may be written to "Schoharie Valley Food Pantry". Volunteers are needed to help with the Food Pantry, if able, please contact Diane Walion at 518-868-4629.

The Food Pantry is open Tuesday & Thursdays, 12-2pm



Devotionals

For quite some time now, we have been receiving copies of 3 different devotionals at the church. In an effort to be fiscally responsible and cut costs, the consistory has voted to discontinue our subscription to The Upper Room. Our current subscription through Words of Hope (which is sponsored by the RCA) provides us with free copies of their regular size print devotional. We also currently receive 25 regular size print copies of Our Daily Bread through the Christian Reformed Church. We will be adding 5 large print copies at no additional cost for those who would prefer it. If you are looking for additional devotional materials, please check out the church library where several resources are available. If you have questions or concerns about this please feel free to speak with a member of your consistory.



Schoharie Reformed Church

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October 27, 2020

Greetings Schoharie Reformed Church Family,

Wow! - that's about all that can be said since March, isn't it? COVID 19 has sure put us through things we never dreamed about. We worshipped on Zoom, then outside for the summer, and, praise God, we are now back in the sanctuary, even though it looks and feels different.

Currently, the consistory is working on the 2021 church budget. The Lord has generously blessed us with sufficient reserves which in the past years we have had to rely on. We hoped with increased fundraising events, we would be able to change this but this has not been the case. We were going to start fundraising with a fish fry on April 3rd and other ideas were in the planning stages, but then COVID put a stop to our plans.

The hard reality is we can no longer continue to run on our reserve finances in the same manner we have done in the past. Currently we are needing to make some difficult financial decisions about stained-glass windows that are in need of repair, the roof on the Heritage House that will soon need replacing, along with other Buildings and Grounds expenses. All of this is on top of our regular expenses. Your consistory has already started the process of cutting expenses in the budget where we can while keeping our focus on the ministry and mission of the church.

Day Camp was still held this past summer, although it looked and felt different through Zoom. We continue to support the After-School Program, the Food Pantry, and other community programs along with our missionaries the Bode Family, currently serving in Oman.

We are in need of continuing to use our gifts and our resources as a church family to continue supporting the mission and ministry of the Schoharie Reformed Church! How can you help? First, please keep your pledges in mind as we enter this season of change in our church. Also, our assessments that we pay have gone up to \$100 per person. If you would like to pay for your assessment, just indicate that on your check, along with your normal offering. As you consider these things please remember:

God is pleased when we give generously. He loves it when we give from our hearts, because that is how God gives. The Bible says that when we give generously, God will bless us. God will bless us with the good feeling we get from helping others. We have all heard the expression "it's better to give than to receive."

Please consider being a giver and make your heart happy! Your offerings may be placed in the collection plate at church. The plate is located in the window closest to the exit door. You may also mail your offering directly to the church at the address on the front of this letter. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to any Consistory member or the church office at 518-295-8177. Thank you for your continued support during these difficult times and as we face challenging times ahead.

Your Consistory,

Liza Toborg

Cindy Parks

Larry Poulin

Laura Stevens

Emily Fagnani

MaryAnn Foland

Day Camp 2021 is Coming!



Save the Date!

July 19 - 23, 2021

Want to get in on the ground floor? Want to help develop this year's theme? Please join us for our first planning meeting of the year on Thursday, November 12th from 7 – 8:30 PM via Zoom. For more information, as well as the Zoom link to this meeting, please contact Liza Toborg at (518) 817-1540.

Operation Christmas Child

Dedication Sunday, November 11, 2020

Shoe boxes are available in the Narthex, or you may contact Cindy Parks at 518-295-7419 or the church office at 518-295-8177 or visit:

www.samaritanspurse.org for complete details.



Highlights from Regional Synod of Albany (RSA) Meeting

October 17, 2020

The regional Synod meeting was held on Saturday, October 17th, via Zoom. Pastor Sherri and Liza Toborg were both in attendance. The meeting primarily consisted of several shared ministry reports and a time of discussion. Some highlights from the reports included:

- Albany Synod School of Ministry offers 6 courses over the span of 2 years as basic education for those seeking the role of commissioned preaching elder.
- Faithwalking/Churches Learning Change – Faithwalking is a spiritual formation process where people are increasingly following the way of Jesus, experiencing ongoing transformation, and developing effective practices for missional living: to serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need; to work for the common good; and to restore individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's design. Churches Learning Change is a corporate transformation process that coincides with the personal transformation process of Faithwalking. Pastor Sherri is the Faithwalking Coordinator for RSA. Pastor Mike is a trained facilitator for Faithwalking as well.
- Synod Ministries Coordinator's Report from Abby Norton-Levering
- Synod Ministries Board Report from Lindsey De Kruif – Schoharie Community Day Camp has received grants from this board for the past 2 summers. In 2019, we received \$1,000 for a Day Camp administrator position. In 2020, we received another \$1,000 for our ministry programming.
- President's Report from Rev. Paige Convis – The question she posed to us was, "What is holding us back from living into God's preferred future for us right now?"

Submitted by Liza Toborg



Highlights From Schoharie Classis Meeting

October 13, 2020

Our fall classis meeting was held via Zoom due to ongoing concerns related to coronavirus. Liza Toborg was your elder representative at this meeting. Both Pastors Mike and Sherri were also in attendance. Below are a few highlights from that meeting.

The minimum salary for ministers in Schoharie Classis for 2021 was set at \$33,800.

The Classis adopted a budget of \$54,025.40 and an assessment of \$100 per active communicant (congregation member).

General Synod will be held on the campus of Central College in Pella Iowa from June 10 – 15, 2021. Pastor Sherri is one of 2 minister delegates attending from our classis.

Regional Synod will likely be held in early May 2021 at an undetermined location. If there are elders that would be interested in attending as delegates, please contact Pastor Mike.

Currently, Pastor Mike is serving as a supervisor for the Crane Reformed Church, and Pastor Sherri is serving as a co-supervisor for Fonda Reformed Church.

A new slate of officers was elected for the Schoharie Classis. Pastor Mike will be the new President. Vice President will be Pastor Jeff Kelley from Middleburgh. Rich Dykstra will serve as Classis Clerk, and Sherrie Gray will be the Treasurer.

Submitted by Liza Toborg



Thanksgiving Baskets

The Joshua Project with Schoharie County Catholic Charities are collecting food to provide Thanksgiving Baskets to our needy neighbors.

Items needed:

boxed stuffing
instant potatoes

cranberry sauce
applesauce

can yams
can vegetables

can gravy

Monetary contributions are welcome.

A donation box is in our Narthex. Food donations will need to be received by Sunday, **November 15th**.

Referral forms are available in the Narthex for anyone that would like to request a basket for their family or a family they know that is in need.





Thank You

Scho-Wright Ambulance Service so appreciates your very generous donation supporting the work we do.

The Pandemic is certainly a challenge for all of us. We have gone through much training to suit up, be safe and follow the State Health Department Protocols. We all rely on each other and work well together responding to any call we encounter. We really are like a family of wonderful people that we feel privileged to work with.

This is a special community to live in. People all reach out to help their neighbors in good and difficult times. Next year we will again, schedule events in the town to celebrate our 50th Anniversary and hope you can join us. We appreciate all you do the community, enjoy the rest of the fall season and stay safe.

Sincerely, Gen Overholt, Treasurer

Schoharie Fire Department would like to express our sincere thanks for your recent contribution. It is indeed gratifying to know that the work that we are doing merits the support of our many friends. Very truly yours.

The Joshua Project thanks you so much for your generous donation. It will go a long way to help the neediest people in Schoharie County.

As a 100% volunteer, 100% privately funded, ecumenical organization, The Joshua Project is truly blessed to receive the support of our community.

Sincerely, The Joshua Project



Schoharie Christian After School Program

This year we are off to a great start at the After-School Program. Everything seems to be going along smoothly. Currently we have 14 children enrolled in the program. We have lots of room for any new children or returning children to the program - Please spread the word!

Our current staff members are our director, JoAnne Mayne along with Linda Sobieski, Brenda Weideman, Annie Vigilante, and Shirley Lawyer. Although we have received PPP funds to support the program, it will not last much longer. Unfortunately, we had to let one of our staff members go, and we cut the hours of the remaining staff.

A new dome climber has been purchased for the program by Linda Mencucci. Hopefully, by the time this newsletter reaches your hands, it will be set up for the children to use.

This year, the school is not transporting children to the Schoharie United Presbyterian Church on Main St., so our staff members go up to the school each day and walk the children down to the church.

We are currently focusing on "Rejoice in the Lord always with a grateful Heart", being thankful to God for so many blessings despite the challenges of 2020.

Blessings,

JoAnne Mayne, Director
Liza Toborg, Advisory Committee Member



A Message from Camp Fowler



To the Saints at Schoharie Reformed Church,

The two pictures tell the story of 2020. For the first time in 65 years we didn't host summer camp. Camp wasn't the same.

But to say camp was "cancelled" would be false.

- We welcomed over 1,000 day guests who got the chance to breathe fresh air, go paddling, swimming, enjoy a picnic, and even make a s'more or two.
- More than 21 clergy & families took advantage of our offer to stay in a Prayer Cabin.
- We have opened the Prayer Cabins, Pine, and Troost for family or small group rentals this fall.
- We undertook big projects, such as sandblasting & refinishing Fenimore and the start of constructing 2 new shower houses.

Summer was a time of lament and a time of sabbatical when many things were re-thought, re-set, and re-newed.

The Board of Trustees is making plans for summer 2021 with modifications regarding the Pandemic. Continue to check our website: www.campfowler.org or social media for updates. We ask for your prayers as we plan new ministry challenges for the future.

We know that all of our churches and the communities you serve have been affected by this pandemic. Fowler is not (how do they say it?) "essential". But it remains **vital** to the lives of many who spend time in this sacred space and leave it inspired and equipped to do God's work.

We ask for your continued support of this ministry.

Walk in balance,
Rev. Kent Busman
Executive Director



Toasty Toes Project

Is a non-profit local organization that brings warm **Pajamas** to those in need at Christmas.

If you would like to donate, please bring brand new **Pajamas** and place in the donation box in the Narthex. All sizes are desperately needed and appreciated!

Donations are needed by November 22th. They will then be delivered to the elves.
Please contact Cindy Parks at 518-295-7419 with any questions.



Many thanks in advanced for your support!

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