

MESSENGER

Niskayuna Reformed Church

June 2019

Over the past year, I served as the President of the Regional Synod of Albany. Below is the report I gave at our assembly on May 5-6, 2019 at Camp Fowler.

Beloved in the Lord, Grace and Peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord, Jesus Christ.

It has been my pleasure to serve as President of the Regional Synod of Albany over the past year. While that mostly meant chairing the executive committee meetings, it also made me more aware of some of the joys and concerns within the bounds of the Synod. I have to name my hesitancy in giving this report. In 1969, then President, Rev. Gordon Curtis said this in his report, "I have studied the previous presidential reports and emerge with a humbling conclusion. No great earth-shaking movements have been born out of them!" While I don't aspire to start an earth-shattering movement with my report, I still have a little bit of hope that it would inspire some of us to remain faithful to our mission. I see this report as a way to name the reality of our Synod at this moment, and also provide some thoughts about the future.

I thank God for this Synod. Yes, we have many concerns and challenges, of which I will address shortly, but overall, God has blessed this Synod with gifted, compassionate, joyful, creative, discerning, and faithful people. I'm not just talking about the Synod Office staff or the Executive Committee. Our entire Synod is filled with gifted and faithful people. With that said, I do want to formally thank all those who invest

themselves in the work they have been called to do. I know they do not do it for recognition, yet I feel it is important for us to show our gratitude and thanksgiving. Therefore, let us give thanks and praise to God for our Synod Staff and the many volunteers, who give of their time, talent, and passion in order that the Synod can continue the mission to spread the good news of Jesus Christ in our respective communities.

I was blessed to be able to read the minutes from the Regional Synods of 1969, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009. It is intriguing to see the life of the Synod over the span of 50 years. As I sorted through the various Synod Assembly minutes, two thoughts came to mind: 1) Membership decline and church struggles are nothing new. 2) The Regional Synod of Albany is a forward-thinking body.

Fifty years ago, officers of the Regional Synod, various theologians, and social scientists were already predicting the decline of Christianity in the United States. We now live the reality of what that decline looks like, seen in the challenges we face throughout the Synod. In the reports from the Classis Presidents, I witnessed the strain, the frustration, and the anxiety that is rising within the various Classes. It feels like flood waters, threatening to overwhelm all of us. Membership losses, low service attendance, lack of pastoral leadership, societal changes, doing more with less, and what do we as a church believe about the inclusion of the LGBTQ community? These struggles are real, and I am aware of how they impact each one

Regional Synod Report continued...

of us. Even while I serve a "big" church and a relatively healthy one, I am starkly aware of how the institution of the church may drastically change in my lifetime.

Looking back at last fifty years, the decline has been a common thread. Yet, I think we are reaching a breaking point. The strain seems to be getting too much for some to handle. The Synod itself has continued to try to turn the tide or at least slow the rate of decline. These attempts were not done half-heartedly or led by inept people. So, what does it say to us that despite our efforts, the decline has continued?

We remember the days when the church was the center of town life, and the pews were filled. The strain, the frustration, and the anxiety make us look back at the past with rose colored glasses, as if the past is where we should be. We often sound like the Israelites in the wilderness as they grumbled against God and Moses about how great life was in the past. The temptation might be to stop moving forward, guard our resources, build our walls higher, or wait for the denomination to save us. In order to continue being a forward-thinking Synod, we need to let the past go. That modern prophet Billy Joel sang in his song Keepin the Faith, "the good ol days weren't always so good and tomorrow ain't as bad as it seems". The glory days of the church are not returning, those days are dead and gone. Let us put them in the grave. It doesn't mean we can't celebrate days gone past, as well as find inspiration from the saints that have gone before us. We can certainly learn lessons from where we've been. But the past cannot hold us back from moving forward. Therefore, we need to

find a way to mourn, to mourn the loss of our place in society, our place in our local communities, and mourn what we once were.

That work is hard, that fact is not lost on me. It is difficult to let go. Death is never easy. Yet, aren't we a people who find victory in death? Aren't we a people who believe in resurrection? Is not our hope found in someone who died and rose again? Death and resurrection are sewn into the fabric of our faith. We are called to die and rise on a daily basis. Every moment, the old self is dying, and the new self is being born. Death needs to happen in order to experience the glory of resurrected life! This is not limited to Jesus, or to only our individual lives, this applies to us as the collective body of Christ here on earth. The stress inducing fear is found in the fact that the new life will not look the same as the old. It may not mean overflowing pews and bank accounts, but I believe it will mean overflowing hearts.

So, where am I going with all of this? A portion of Article 27 of the Belgic Confession provides us hope:

This church has existed from the beginning of the world and will last until the end, as appears from the fact that Christ is eternal King who cannot be without subjects. And this holy church is preserved by God against the rage of the whole world, even though for a time it may appear very small to human eyes—as though it were snuffed out.

One Classis President said this in his report, "Of course it is a fallacy to think that small churches are not big enough in God's eyes. It is also a fallacy to think that the members of a small church are less acceptable to God, and this means that the small church can be effective and has value." I believe we need to

Regional Synod Report continued...

alter our understanding of what church is and what it should be. We need to redefine success and failure within our churches. Could it be that our idea of church success is corrupted by the consumeristic society that we find ourselves in? Bigger is not better, economically richer is not better. What if we don't need to be great churches but faithful churches. This kind of thinking may change how we operate in dramatic fashion. We may need to lay to rest long held traditions in order to transform into what God has called us to be. To be perfectly honest, this sometimes scares me to death. Because my livelihood depends on the institution of church as we know it today.

We must lean into the difficult conversations. I say this as someone who avoids confrontation with every fiber of my being. We don't have to agree on everything to remain in a covenant relationship with each other. One of the constant themes in the Classis president's reports is the importance of relationships. Even though everyone feels strained they continue doing what they do because they value relationships. My dear friends, there will always be something that will try to break us apart. There will always be a debate about our life and witness in this world. We know this from the very beginning of the church. Our denominational fractures mimic what is going on in the broader culture, polarization continues to plague our nation. What if for once we as a church could be ahead of the game and demonstrate a different way of

being. Remaining connected even while we disagree on vital matters of faith. Because the debates we have impact people in ways we may not be aware of. How long are we going to villainize those who we disagree with? How long are we going to make the other, whoever that may be, feel like they are not enough as they are?

I do not believe we need to do more with less, we need to be more. Let's hold fast to the promise of God from Ezekiel, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh". The work of transformation is hard, its messy, its painful, its stressful, but it is the best kind of work we can engage in. The work of transforming ourselves, our communities, and our world is the work of God's kingdom. The beautiful thing is that we do not do this alone, it is God who does the heavy lifting. Our responsibility is to continue to trust God, remaining open to God's movement in our lives and our world.

~Pastor Jason



Birthdays

2	Scott DeBlock
2	JoeAnne Tully
6	Rock Rockwood
10	Jim Friderici
12	Marjorie Hageman
13	Peter Brownsey
16	Barb Sim
17	June Peterson
17	Mike Mason
17	Ann Duncan
20	Sally Perlee
20	Hailey Waxman

20	Hope Waxman
21	Jeff Rivenburg
22	Maya Lembo
24	Christina Pustay
25	Elizabeth Mazza
25	Ned Spain
30	Caroline Pustay
30	Les Perlee



Anniversaries

Bob & Tracy Sacca	1
Scotty & Jan Clark	14
Robert & Donna Stewart	
	20
John & Deb Bennett	21
Peter & Donnie Brownsey	
	26
Jon & Kim Waxman	26
Charles & Karen Goddard	
	29
Scott & Heidi DeBlock	29

Valleycats Game

We have 25 tickets available for the Tri-City Valleycats game on **Friday, July 19th** at 7pm. Tickets are \$10. They will be playing the Lowell Spinners. Contact Pastor Jason to RSVP or for more information.

Office News

Summer Office Hours*

Monday-Thursday	8 am -3:30 pm
Friday	8 am-1 pm



*effective June 21st

Pastor Jason will be on vacation Jun 17th - 23rd, returning to the office on June 24th. Ellen will be out on June 17th, 18th, 21st & 28th. There will be someone in the office to cover the phones from **10 am-2 pm**.

Don't forget you can access the weekly bulletins, monthly Messenger and sermons online at **www.niskayunareformed.org**. Scroll down about half way and they are all located on the RIGHTHAND SIDE. In addition, a weekly email newsletter goes out every Wednesday. This includes various activities and events that are happening at NRC. If you do not receive these and would like to receive them, please contact Ellen at 518-785-5575 or office@niskayunareformed.org. This is a great way to stay connected even when you are unable to make church.



Women's Fellowship Group (WFG)

The next WFG meeting is **Wednesday, June 12th** from 2-4 pm. We hope that you will be able to join us whenever you can.



Women's Book Group (WBG)

The WBG will be meeting on **June 15th** at 10 am at June

Peterson's home. Please contact June with questions or if you need directions.

MISSION & SERVICE

June 2nd Communion Collection: Our Communion Collection for June will benefit Wildwood Programs. Wildwood first opened its doors over fifty years ago as a local, not for profit organization that was formed when a group of parents found that their children did not fit neatly into existing programs. Today, Wildwood meets the needs of the individuals it supports with a person-centered, holistic approach where a wide range of education, employment, residential, recreation, and counseling services work collaboratively to maximize a person's independence. Your donation will enable Wildwood Programs to continue supporting local families with special needs. Thank you!

Looking ahead: July 7th—

SICM Schenectady Community Ministries

May Communion Collection

Camp Fowler:

\$592 (collected)/\$800 (donated)

Once again, we appreciate the generosity of our congregation. Your gifts will allow this summer's campers to become closer to God while experiencing the great outdoors.

Special Note: Our Communion Collections run for the entire month. If you are unable to attend church, you may mail your donation to the church. All checks should be made payable to NRC and specify the name of the organization that you wish to support.

Salvation Army Soup Kitchen

NRC was responsible for the **May 24th** Soup Kitchen. On that day, we served 110 guests, 36 lbs. of fruit cocktail, 40 lbs. of pulled pork/chicken, 24 lbs. of coleslaw, and potato chips. We also provided 6 gallons of drinks and served assorted, donated pastries for dessert. Many thanks to this month's volunteers for their service: Kathy and Bill Dzamba, Sue Lichtig, Gary Male, Judy Valente, and Margaret Wexler.

The next soup kitchen is **June 26, 2019**. If you would like to help with this much needed and very much appreciated mission, NRC volunteers meet at the Salvation Army about 10 am and we finish by 1:30 pm. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Sue Lichtig

(518-785-4574), Barbara Valenti (518-280-4578) or call the NRC office.

SICM Emergency Food Pantry For the month of June, the food item we will be collecting is canned **TUNA**. Please consider making a donation to help combat food insecurity in our community. We will be collecting a different food item each month. Monetary donations are also welcome and can often purchase more food per dollar than we often realize. There is a green collection box in the narthex. **Every donation impacts lives.**

Eyewear/Hearing Aid Collection There is a collection box in the Education Building for your used eyeglasses and hearing aids to benefit the Lions Club International which will be distributed to those in need. Several full boxes have already been donated—Thank You!

2019 Volunteer Opportunities

Schenectady City Mission-

July 8 & September 9

Time: 4:45-6:15

Please contact Michele Kopp at mishcata@gmail.com, if you are interested in volunteering. Sign-ups to volunteer must be done on-line at <https://citymissionofscheneectady.volunteerhub.com/lp/allevnts/events/index>

Salvation Army Soup Kitchen-

June 26, July 24, August 15, September 17, October 22 & November 19

Time: 10:30 am-1:30 pm

SICM Summer Lunch Program

July 29 - August 2

More information will be provided about the location and the times.

UPCOMING M & SC Events

Brooks BBQ

August 21

Do you know a student or a Scout who needs volunteer hours? This is the perfect opportunity!

Next Meeting:

August 12, 2019 @ 7pm All are welcome

Please note: no meetings in June or July

City Mission

Thank you NRC volunteers for your energy and dedication in serving yet another dinner at the Schenectady City Mission on May 6th. Over 160 delicious meals were distributed to a grateful group of diners. Joan Peebles, Lynne Barnard-Avvedutti, Gary and Dorilee Male, Bob Cantine and Michele Kopp kept up the pace, serving tasty burritos with rice, refilling coffee cups and delivering luscious desserts to the crowd. No one left hungry or forgotten. See attached picture of our wonderful volunteers!

Our next volunteer date is Monday, **July 8, 2019**. Please contact Michele Kopp at- mishcata@gmail.com if you can help out.



Niskayuna Senior Center

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, June 4

Planting w/ Matt from Co-op Ext
10 am

Croissant Day @ 12:30

Trivia and Treat

Thursday, June 6

iPad Basics class @ 10:30 am

Birthday Celebration @ 12:30

Tuesday, June 11

iPad Basics class @ 11am

US Golf Day @ 12:30 pm

Walking Club @ 1 pm

(weather permitting)

Wednesday, June 12

Shopping to LG Outlets

10 am- 3 pm

(Rain date June 19)

Thursday, June 13

Father's Day festivities w/special meal
12 pm

Painting w/ Peggy Workshop @ 7pm
(NSC-LL)

Friday, June 14th

Men's Group (New) @ 10-11 am

iPad Art class @ 10:30 am

Saturday, June 15

*Empire Safety Council Defensive
Driving Class @ Center @ 9 am - 3 pm

Tuesday, June 18

Alz Association Speaker @ 1pm

Thursday, June 20

History of Ed Sullivan

trivia and discussion @ 12:30

Tuesday, June 25

History of Color TV

discussion and trivia @ 12:30

Thursday, June 27

Summer Camp Day

reminiscing and so much S'more!

12:30 pm

Friday, June 28th

Men's Group (New) @ 10-11 am

Preschool & Nursery School

The teachers here at our church
Preschool do an outstanding job with
The 3 & 4 year old children in their
care.

Here are some comments from the
recent evaluations by the parents:

- The best part about this program is how genuinely kind both teachers are...very happy with this school.
- Teachers are so caring and make it such an inviting, inclusive, low stress environment.
- Having an outside playground is such an added benefit!
- We adore these teachers!
- We have truly enjoyed being a part of the preschool program, and our child has learned so much just in the little time she's been there. She loves Mrs. Mausert & Mrs. Sims dearly. They are great teachers.

Thank you Kathy & Wendy for all that you do for our church. We are so blessed to have such dedicated teachers. This is such a vital ministry.

~The Nursery School Committee and all of the NRC congregation



June

June 2nd 7th Sunday of Easter

Ushers- Bob & Tracy Sacca
John & Deborah Bennett
Counters- Alan Holmes
Gary Male
Leo Lichtig
Greeters- Janel Mirel

June 9th Pentecost

Ushers- Children's Day
Counters- Les Perlee
Kim Cerone
Greeters- Children's Day

June 16th 1st Sunday after Pentecost

Ushers- Jeff Rivenburg
Dug Jackson
Brian Maclutsky
Scott Haefner
Counters- Paul Alois
Steve Avveduti
Greeters- Jeff & Sandy Rivenburg

June 23rd 2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Ushers- Richard Mizenko
Bill McCann
Karen Moak
Norm Tellier
Counters- Judy Henery
Maureen Rizzi
Greeters- Bill & Kathy Dzamba

June 30th 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

Ushers- John & Lynn DelSignore
Harry & Cindy Kuchera
Counters- Sharon Rice-Herbst
Leo Lichtig
Tony Pechulis
Greeters- Cindy Strassenburgh



The Niskayuna Reformed Church
3041 TROY-SCHENECTADY ROAD
NISKAYUNA, NEW YORK 12309
Founded in 1750

Sunday Service of Worship

9:30 am

Contact Information

Office: 518-785-5575

Emails:

office@niskayunareformed.org (Ellen-admin)

srpastor@niskayunareformed.org (Pastor Jason)

Website: www.niskayunareformed.org

Summer Office Hours (effective June 21st)

Monday– Thursday 8 am - 3:30 pm

Friday 8 am -1 pm

Staff

The Rev. Jason Fulkerson	Pastor
Paul Alois	Treasurer
Joyce Anderson	Director of Youth Choir
Rebecca Benjamin	Organist
Andrew Burger	Director of Music
James Friderici	Director of Bell Choir
Ellen Gauna	Church Administrator
Sabrina Squires	Director of Christian Education
Suzanne Mason	Director of Cherubs Choir
Kathy Mausert	Director of Nursery School
Lester Perlee	Cemetery Superintendent
Rick Wallace	Church Sexton

2019 CONSISTORY

Elders

Chad Pezzano, VP
John Bennett
Linda Gardner
Dug Jackson
Trudy Lehner
Suzi O'Brien

Deacons

Lizbeth Amorelli
Scott Haefner
Alan Holmes
Richard Mizenko
Ron Ricard
Maureen Rizzi

June

Saturday, June 1

No events

Sunday, June 2

Communion

Mission-Wildwood

Confirmation Sunday

8:45 am-Sr. Choir (S)

9:30 am-Worship Service (S)

9:45 am-Sunday School (EB)

10:30 am-Youth Choir (M)

10:30 am-Coffee Hour (FH)

10:45 am-Cherubs (103)

11:15-3:15 pm-KCPC (S/FH)

Monday, June 3

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

9:30 am-Wildwood (K)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

6 pm-WA (104)

7 pm-SA (EO)

Tuesday, June 4

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

4 pm-Flute (101)

7 pm-Boy Scouts (FH)

7 pm-Property (104)

Wednesday, June 5

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

4 pm-Flute (101)

Thursday, June 6

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

9:30 am-Wildwood (K)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

2:30-Archives (L)

Friday, June 7

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

6-9:30 pm-KCPC (S)

7 pm-AA (104)

Saturday, June 8

3 pm-CDDC (FH)

Sunday, June 9

Children's Day

9:30 am-Worship Service (S)

10:30 am-Ice cream

Social (FH)

11:15-3:15 pm-KCPC (S/FH)

Monday, June 10

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

9:30 am-Wildwood (104)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

6 pm-WA (104)

7 pm-SA (EO)

Tuesday, June 11

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

4 pm-Flute (101)

7 pm-Boy Scouts (FH)

Wednesday, June 12

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

2 pm-WFG (L)

4 pm-Flute (101)

7-Consistory (L)



Thursday, June 13

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

9:30 am-Wildwood (K)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

2:30-Archives (L)

Friday, June 14

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

6-9:30 pm-KCPC (S)

7 pm-AA (104)

Saturday, June 15

10 am-WBG

(June Peterson's home)

Sunday, June 16

9:30 am-Worship Service (S)

10:30 am-Coffee Hour (FH)

11:15-3:15 pm-KCPC (S/FH)

Monday, June 17

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

9:30 am-Wildwood (K)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

7 pm-CCC (L)

Tuesday, June 18

9:15-12:00 pm-NS (101)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

4 pm-Flute (101)

Wednesday, June 19

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

4 pm-Flute (101)

Thursday, June 20

9:30 am-Wildwood (K)

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

Friday, June 21

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

6-9:30 pm-KCPC (S)

7 pm-AA (104)

Saturday, June 22

No events

Sunday, June 23

9:30 am-Worship Service (S)

10:30 am-Coffee Hour (FH)

11:15-3:15 pm-KCPC (S/FH)

Monday, June 24

2-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

6 pm-WA (104)

7 pm-SA (EO)

Tuesday, June 25

7:30-6 pm-TSL (FH/2 &3)

11:15 am-Primary

Election (FH/1)

4 pm-Flute (101)

Wednesday, June 26

7:30-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

10 am-Soup Kitchen (SA)

4 pm-Flute (101)

Thursday, June 27

7:30-6 pm-TSL (FH/104)

Friday, June 28

TSL Closed

6-9:30 pm-KCPC (S)

7 pm-AA (104)

Saturday, June 29

No events

Sunday, June 30

9:30 am-Worship Service (S)

10:30 am-Coffee Hour (FH)

11:15-3:15 pm-KCPC (S/FH)

CCC Congregational Care
Committee

CM City Mission

H & A History & Archives

M & SC Mission & Service
Committee

SA Salvation Army

WFG Women's Fellowship
Group

WBG Women's Book Group