

News From the Pews

REFORMED CHURCH OF FREEHOLD
DEMONSTRATING GOD'S RECONCILING LOVE

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Events at Freehold Reformed



Our concert series (Events at Freehold Reformed) dove into the online events with our late spring event “At Home with Neil and Rita.” Following this event we dreamed of filling the sanctuary for a dynamic in person Thanksgiving concert. When this proved untenable, a hybrid event was developed. With a dozen people in the pews Gramercy Brass and Friends presented a delightful concert that was both fun and poignant. Having originated in the Gramercy neighborhood of New York, Gramercy Brass presented the music of New York communities, including Ragtime music developed in New York’s Tin Pan alley. (It was named Tin Pan Alley because of all the composers working at their pianos along that corridor.) The contribution of women to musical composition was honored by presenting the work of incomparable songwriter Carole King. The Thanksgiving concert included some new elements, the poetry of Maya Angelou and the recitation of the Janis Ian’s song, *Stars*. These elements came together for a powerful program in support of Town Clock Community Development Corporation’s work of providing permanent, supportive, affordable housing for survivors of domestic violence. Their vision is ending the cycle of domestic violence by giving survivors time. The concert received \$1,150 in donations along with a \$4,000 sponsorship from Thrivent.



Last year’s Christmas concert was a joyful addition to the advent season. After considering options the most prudent choice of another online event was chosen. A previously recorded Gramercy and Friends was edited and posted in support of Freehold Area Open Door. Monetary donations were solicited online, grocery donations were collected, and a Thrivent Action Team helped with promotion of the event and through the purchase of additional groceries for Freehold Area Open Door.

Pastor's Pen

Dear Brothers and Sister in Christ,

The proverb, "Necessity is the mother of invention" is true enough on its own, but when paired with Edison's statement, "Genius is 99 % perspiration and 1% inspiration," together they capture the creative and dedicated work accomplished in the face of the coronavirus. The inspiration and perspiration of our community is reflected more than ever in the stories told in this newsletter.

Our ability to respond to these challenging times call to mind Paul's words in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Paul is here expressing gratitude for the support he has received from the Philippian congregations. While expressing gratitude, he is quick to affirm that he is content whatever his circumstances. He is content proclaiming the gospel from prison or from the public square, well-fed or going hungry. Circumstances do not define him, rather his contentment transcends all circumstances because he is strengthened by Christ. Regardless of challenging times we can witness to Christ and find strength from him.

Let me say thank you for your witness in difficult times. Thank you to everyone who continue to work so hard to express Christ's love within the faith community and beyond. Thanks to Lauren for her work in the office and beyond; to Rich and Lorraine for decorating and remembering all that needs to be attended to at church; to John and Lee Ann for the work in the music and worship programs as well as wiping down pews with Wilfred Ojo after worship; to Beth Moore and John and Christina Girvin for the music they brought to our advent and Christmas season; to Gabrielle (assisted by Delaney, Lee Ann and Sharon) for work with our youth; to Barb Lyon and our Sunday school kids for notes written to our seniors and gifts delivered.

Let me also thank the congregations for your kind and generous Christmas gift. It is encouraging to receive this expression of support and to the encouragement that comes from knowing we are in Christ's service together.

Peace,
Pastor David

Reformed Church Home Angel Tree

Every December the Reformed Church of Freehold sets out an Angel Tree with gift tags, each representing a gift to be bought for one of the residents of the Reformed Church Home in Old Bridge. Due to the current pandemic we had to switch things up a bit this year. We contacted the Home and they said they were also in need of particular unwrapped items for those living in the Isolation and Rehabilitation Units. Through a Thrivent Action Team and your generous donations we were able to deliver fourteen large blankets, ten men's shower kits, four clock radios, three portable radios, four sweatshirts, a women's blouse, and many assorted toiletries. We also gave the home a large assortment of prayer shawls that we had been collecting.



PAGE 2 The staff at the Reformed Church Home were blown away by all of the items and want to send their sincere thanks to all of you for remembering their residents this Advent season.

Worship & Music

Worship is a vital part of our faith tradition. The history of Christianity has seen worship take many forms. The early Christian church gathered in homes. At times those gatherings were forced to be held in even smaller secret groups. Emperor Constantine's faith experience led to Christianity becoming the dominant religion in the empire and soon grand cathedrals were built for worship. The Reformation led to new movements that once again met in smaller groups. Which all to say, changes in worship are nothing new.

Our worship has changed this year. Worship went exclusively virtual in March and then shifted to a mix of online and in person worship in August. While infections have risen significantly in the past two months, we continue to worship in-person and online. The consistory is confident that following protocols provides a safe worship experience. We maintain a predominantly one-way traffic flow, wear masks, maintain distance, disinfect carefully, and circulate air with fans.

Our virtual worship is a vital piece of our ministry as well. Our virtual services started with quick solutions for what was hoped would be a short period of time. We moved from laptop cameras and microphones, to a camera designed for streaming, and the addition of a digital microphone. We are still working through the challenges of on-line worship. Sound quality remains inconsistent. While our sound board was an excellent system 15 years ago, sound technology has evolved, and it is not designed for digital streaming. We are beginning to explore what a shift to a digital sound board and improved streaming might entail. We are continuing to explore ways to stay connected.

Recipes

Pasta Fagioli-Submitted by Amy Craven

2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil	1 (15 oz.) can diced tomatoes
1/2 lb. spicy (or sweet) Italian sausage	4 cups chicken broth
1 finely chopped medium yellow onion	2 sprigs of rosemary
2 medium carrots, peeled & finely chopped	1 & 1/2 cups of uncooked ditalini pasta
2 stalks of celery, finely chopped	Freshly grated parmesan cheese
3 cloves of garlic, minced	3TSP. Chopped fresh parsley, for garnish
2 (15 oz.) cans, great northern beans	

In a large, deep pot over medium heat, heat oil. Add sausage and cook, breaking up with a wooden spoon, until cooked through, about 5 minutes. Stir in onion, carrots, and celery and cook until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, 1 minute more. Season with salt and pepper, then add in the beans (with their liquid), diced tomatoes, chicken broth, and rosemary. Bring to a boil, then stir in uncooked ditalini. Reduce heat to medium and cook until pasta is al dente, about 8 minutes. Adjust seasoning to taste.

Creamy Chicken Gnocchi Soup (Olive Garden Copycat Recipe)- Submitted by Lauren Redmond

3 Tbs. butter & 1 Tbs. olive oil	1 to 2, 14 oz. cans chicken broth
1 cup diced onions	1 Tbs. fresh thyme
1 to 2 stalks celery diced	1 cup shredded carrots
2 garlic cloves minced	1 cup fresh spinach leaved, chopped
1/2 cup flour	1 cup diced & cooked chicken breast
2 cups half and half	1- 16 oz package of mini gnocchi

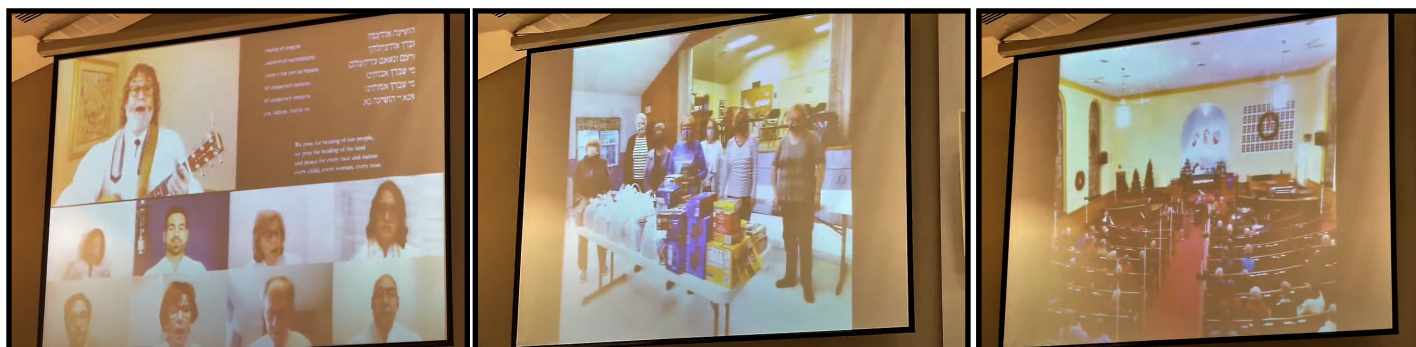
In a large pot add the butter and olive oil and sauté the onion, celery, and garlic over medium/high heat until tender. Add the flour to create a roux and cook for one minute. Slowly whisk in the half and half and the chicken broth and stir until it starts to thicken. Add the thyme, carrots, spinach, chicken, and the gnocchi. Simmer for 5 minutes. (If you prefer thinner soup, add the second can of chicken broth.) Add salt and pepper to taste.

Freehold Clergy Association

One of the first community events I attended in Freehold was the Clergy Association's Thanksgiving service at Old Tenant Presbyterian Church. It was moving to see Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities come together to express gratitude to God. The Thanksgiving Service is a long standing and much-loved program of the Freehold Clergy Association. While different, the tradition continued. This year's service was virtual. While a dozen folks gathered in-person at the Co-Cathedral of St. Robert Bellarmine, many more gathered virtually via Zoom and live streaming. Churches submitted photos and recordings of musical pieces. Some clergy recorded their reflections and others spoke in person. All our faith communities were once again richly represented as gratitude to God was expressed.



Other Freehold Clergy Association programs will be continuing virtually. The Children of God series (formerly Children of Abraham) is planning a series of Zoom conversations. Look for more information about a recorded Martin Luther King Jr. program.



Property

Through the fall many church building parts have been painted, fixed up and the place is looking much better. Tom Moore was able to get the front, large stained glass window caulked and some of the frame work painted. In the Spring we hope to get a lift and be able to finish that project and repair some steeple areas and check the gutter system. Our church is at the size and age where we are never done with the maintenance!

If you have time this winter and wish to come in and do some inside cleaning let me or the office know. We'll be glad to arrange a safe time and way to get you in. There is some dusting, vacuuming, window cleaning, floor mopping that can be easily done.

Thank you to all that have contributed to this years projects by helping or donating to the cause.

Reformed Church Women

PAGE 4 The RCW was able to purchase five turkeys to donate to Freehold's Open Door Thanksgiving drive and drop off the items that were donated here at church. We also donated \$1,000.00 to the Freehold Clergy Association to use for their feeding programs this winter.

What's New?

The Uchno's: In November, Julia and I got crafty making felt Advent calendars for the Sunday School families for our special get together. We made them the way we knew how, by snipping and gluing. I am sure we would greatly benefit from and enjoy Lorraine's sewing class whenever it happens! In December, we enjoyed our snow day off from virtual school and spent many hours playing outside and trying out Matthew's sled for the first time. Joel recently celebrated 10 years with his company. There were many gifts to choose from, but he finally decided to surprise the kids with a projector for movie nights this winter. No large gatherings for us this Christmas. The upside was many more days to celebrate with all the spread out visits. The kids are enjoying their new gifts. Matthew is taking fort building to new heights with his new building set. Santa is thrilled to hear that Julia's favorite gift is a bubble wand that makes giant bubbles.



The Redmond's: It's been pretty quiet in the Redmond house but we did manage to make some Christmas cookies and visit the holiday light display at Six Flags. One evening I even went to iPlay's pop up Christmas bar and had cocktails and s'mores by a firepit outside. That was definitely a first for me. The best part of the holiday season though was our big snow storm. The kid's had a blast throwing snowballs at each other!



The Sanicola's: The girls enjoyed playing in the snow on their trip to Michigan.



2021 Children of God: An Interfaith Conversation

Tolerance and acceptance only happens when we know and understand one another. The Freehold Clergy Association has always been committed to bringing our communities together in worship, action and learning. Please join us for these panel discussions and special educational opportunities where we will explore facets of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in order to understand our differences as well as our commonalities. The purpose of these programs is to build mutual understanding and acceptance. Please note that each session will be held on Zoom and registration is required for each individual session.

The Golden Rule in Our Traditions, 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, January 13, 2021
To register for this session go to: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZovcuGgpzkrGdEWu9HEYvzhsza4QoXJfAdr>

Reformed Church of Freehold

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Secretary–Lauren Redmond
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Treasurer–Jill Moore

CONSISTORY 2020

Lorraine Yoncak– V.P., alt. Classis Delegate
Bill Barth–Classis Delegate

Barb Lyon– Hospitality & Congregational Care
Lorraine Yoncak–Buildings & Grounds
Lee Ann Newland–Worship & Music
Wilfred Ojo– Human & Financial Resources

Bill Barth– Missions & Benevolences
Helen McKenzie–Fellowship
Gabrielle Uchno–Education
Michael Polifka– Worship & Music

Odds and Ends

Food Certificates

An easy way to support the church is by buying food gift certificates and it won't cost you a dime! The church earns 5% on every dollar you spend. It's a win-win. We have cards for ShopRite and Stop and Shop. Please call the church office to schedule a time to purchase gift cards.

Flowers

If you would like to have flowers given in honor or memory of a loved one or event, please sign up on the Flower Chart in the lobby. The cost is \$20. Please make checks payable to: "Reformed Church of Freehold" and write "flowers" in the memo.

Secretary's Hours

Our secretary is in the office from 9 AM –12:30 PM on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Hours are subject to change as needed. As always, please feel free to contact Lauren at the office ahead of time to arrange to come in.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

JANUARY

1 The Ojo's
4 Madeline Jacobus
4 Gabrielle Uchno
7 Matthew Uchno
11 Audrey Statesir
14 Richard Morano
15 Jennifer Morano
15 Alex Sanicola
19 Kristen Murphy
20 The Starsinic's
21 Julia Uchno
25 Ashley Tiedemann

FEBRUARY

4 John Seifert
11 Sidney Ulm
21 Wilfred Ojo
23 Ryan Morano
27 Bethany Sanicola



Education

COVID slowed us down, but it couldn't stop us from living out our faith and completing our Lenten school kit mission project. On a beautiful day in November, when wearing a coat was actually optional, we were able to gather outside and finally put them together! Being able to come together and work on this project during a time when we don't see each other often was an added treat. We are blessed to have so many giving hearts. Through our generous church and Sunshine Schoolhouse donations and Thrivent Action Team money, we were able to donate over 60 kits. They were dropped off at a collection station and will be shipped where they are needed most. There is a need for these kits all year round.

The Sunday school celebrated the first Sunday in Advent by meeting at Michael Tighe park for our all ages in person gathering. Pastor David shared some Advent lessons and stories with the children. Each family also decorated an Advent calendar with ornaments, stickers, and ribbon. The pockets were then filled with treats and Bible verses. The children also worked with Mrs. Lyon and the Sunday School teachers to make Christmas cards for our homebound members who are also in our thoughts. We hope their greetings will bring you cheer. We also made time for some silly fun involving garland tinsel and trees...I mean people! Aidan currently has bragging rights on being the fastest to wrap himself in 15 ft of garland and yes, Pastor David was a very good sport when without much warning he got decorated with garland and some fake snow too!

Thanks to being able to adapt with the times and God's guiding hand, we were able to carry on with a Christmas Pageant this year. How grateful we are that Pastor David was able to find and orchestrate an all ages/interactive/zoom pageant chock full of fun props to bring us all together to celebrate Jesus' birth. A big thank you to all who participated. Great job! Whether you were able to see the recorded and artfully edited video of An Ugly Christmas Sweater Christmas Pageant during worship or from the comfort of your own home on Facebook, we hope it helped bring the hope, light and joy of the Christmas Story to you. And in this most upside down year, we hope you were able to experience the fun of an ugly Christmas sweater and a silly hat too!



**THE REFORMED
CHURCH
OF FREEHOLD**

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DEMONSTRATING GOD'S
RECONCILING LOVE

Dates to Remember

January

- 1 Friday** **New Year's Day**
- 3 Sunday** Communion Worship, 10 AM
Sunday School Zoom, 1 PM Younger Class
- 10 Sunday** Worship, 10 AM
Congregational Meeting, 11 AM
Sunday School Zoom, 1PM Older Class
- 12 Tuesday** Consistory Meeting, 6:30 PM
Zoom Meeting
- 17 Sunday** Worship, 10 AM
Sunday School Zoom, 1 PM Younger Class
- 24 Sunday** Worship, 10 AM
Sunday School Zoom, 1 PM Older Class
- 31 Sunday** Worship, 10 AM
Sunday School Zoom, 1 PM Group gathering

February

- 7 Sunday** Communion Worship, 10 AM
Sunday School Zoom ,1 PM Younger Class
- 9 Tuesday** Consistory Meeting, 6:30 PM
Zoom Meeting
- 14 Sunday** Worship, 10 AM
Sunday School Zoom, 1 PM Older Class
Happy Valentine's Day
- 21 Sunday** Worship, 10 AM
Sunday School Zoom ,1 PM Younger Class
- 28 Sunday** Worship,10 AM
Sunday School Zoom, 1 PM Older Class