Reformed Church of Highland Park
128th Annual Congregational Meeting, May 6th, 2018 - Agenda

- Call to Order and Opening Prayer
- Prayers of Thanksgiving and Petition For Our Church 2017-2018
- Appointing Clerk Pro-Tem—Carrie Dirks-Amadeo
- Presentation of the Minutes of the Annual Meeting from May 7, 2017
- Election of Elders and Deacons
- Report from Pastor Seth & Pastor Stephanie
- Report from Pastor Amos
- Reports of the Consistorial Committees
  Faith Development
  Fellowship
  Justice and Mercy
  Property
  Worship Committee
  Care
  -Stephen Ministry
- Report from Pastor Henny About RCHP Indonesian Fellowship
- Special Committees & Projects and Affiliated Organizations Updates
  • Thrift Shop
  • Women’s Sewing Circle
  • Prayer Shawls, Selma
  • Indonesian Immigration Class Action Lawsuit
  • Shiloh
  • The Table
  • RCHP-AHC
  • Detention Center Visitation
  • Interfaith-RISE (Refugee & Immigrant Services & Empowerment)
  • Global Grace Cafe
  • DIRE
  Churches Improving Communities
  • Church Accomplishing Long Term Recovery
  • Church Based Mental Health Services
  • Neighborcorp
  • Who Is My Neighbor, Inc.
- Finance Report –
  • 2017 End of Year P&L
  • 2017 Balance Sheet
- Statistical Report
-A Prayer of Remembrance for Those Who Entered the Nearer Presence of God in 2017
- Other Business
- Adjournment with Prayer & Benediction

**RCHP Annual Meeting 2017 – Minutes**

**Call to Order and Opening Prayer:** Pastor Seth called to order the 127th Annual Congregational Meeting at 10:20am with a prayer.

**Prayers of Thanksgiving:** Church members offered various prayers of thanksgiving for this church over the past year.

**Appointing of Clerk Pro-Tem:** Carrie Dirks Amodeo was appointed as Clerk Pro-Tem for this meeting.

**Presentation and Approval of Minutes:** Pastor Stephanie presented the minutes of the 2015 meeting and raised a motion to approve. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Election of Elders and Deacons:** Pastor Seth discussed the process of the election of Elders/Deacons.
Carol Turner and Cassandra Olivares as Elders and Milagros Aguayo as Deacon were elected to Consistory during the year. Consistory put forth names for new Elders and Deacons: Sylvia Hove as Deacon, and, Carrie Dirks Amodeo, and Isaac Ehioge as Elders. Pastor Seth asked if there were additional names to put forth from the floor as candidates. There were none. Pastor Seth noted that names for Consistory candidates can be made known to him throughout the year to be considered as vacancies arise. He raised a motion to approve the election of the candidates, and the motion was passed unanimously. He concluded this section with a prayer of thanksgiving.

**Report from Pastor Seth and Stephanie:** Pastor Seth advised church members that even though the Consistory is full right now, all of the various committees still need to grow. He encouraged people, as they are reading the various reports, to consider what committee they may like to join. Pastor Stephanie briefly reviewed the Pastoral report and advised that more information could be found on the RCHP website. Pastor Stephanie expressed gratitude for wonderful staff at RCHP, giving specific thanks for Wendy Jager, Lara Arp, and Amos Caley. Pastor Seth highlighted the final section of the Pastoral report, advising that RCHP is working to find more ways for our leaders to use their various skills.

**Report from Music and Youth Minister – Amos Caley:** Amos referenced his report, highlighting that he feels privileged to oversee the Worship Ministry and the gifted and talented people that are involved in the ministry. He encouraged people to come to Choir Practice on Wednesdays, noting the times of the Gospel Choir, Chancel Choir, and Praise Team practices. Amos also noted that he has been cleared for ordination and encouraged people to read his report for more details. Pastor Stephanie then introduced Ian Howells as our new pianist.

**Consistorial Committees**

**Faith Development – Lara Arp** spoke and encouraged people to review her report for specific information on what this area of the church is doing and the why behind it. She highlighted the Sunday morning teachers, Sunday School, Adult Education hour, the 40-50 children that attend the various Youth Groups on Monday nights, the weekly Bible studies and other groups are full of energy, growing and thriving. She brought attention to the need for more help/teachers and encouraged people to reach out to her if they are interested in helping in some manner. Lara
noted that a strength of the faith education offered at RCHP is a connection between faith and the world.

**Fellowship** – Pastor Stephanie stated that the broad purpose of the Fellowship Committee is to create opportunities to gather, to get to know each other, and through this to better know God. She encouraged people to review the report to see the full spectrum of events that are offered for all stages of life, and to let the committee know of any new ideas they may have for additional opportunities.

**Justice and Mercy** – Cassandra reported that the purpose of the committee is to respond to the world as the hands and feet of Jesus. She highlighted a few items from the report – raising money for fresh water wells in Zimbabwe through the RCHP Vacation Bible School, the holiday Angel Tree, efforts toward interfaith solidarity, the Lentin Prayer and Protest program, the showing of the documentary, 13th. Looking ahead, the committee will support the NJ Institute of Social Justice and its campaign to close NJ youth prisons. She encouraged people to read the report for more details, and invited anyone to participate in the committee.

**Property** – Anthony DiGrigoli reported. He thanked Harry for all the work he does in the church – Harry makes the committee and the church work! He also highlighted some completed projects, including painting and installing security cameras. The garden will be a project for the coming year – more usable community space, and/or children’s space. He ended by noting that many projects still remain (more painting and some repair and painting in the sanctuary) and encouraged people to let the committee know if they are interested in helping.

**Worship** – Amos Caley referenced the report and highlighted how our worship services are robust and thriving. Many people and many diverse talents are involved in worship. He thanked musicians Derek and Ian and noted that 27 musicians and vocalists participate in worship via praise teams. Wednesday evening choir and praise team practice are a regular way that people experience God at RCHP. He also mentioned the ongoing need for tech support with the sound system.

**Care** – Diane Wagner referenced the report, and highlighted the elders being available after service, the new bereavement calendar, ongoing home/hospital/facility visits, babysitting, meals, and the thrift store.

**Sewing Circle** – Pastor Seth highlighted the sewing circle as an important ministry of the church and mentioned new member, Ellie Monroe.

**Special Committees and Affiliated Organizations Updates**

**Thrift Shop** – Frank Corcoran reviewed his report. Pastor Seth recognized Frank and all of the Thrift Shop volunteers for their great work.

**Prayer Shawls** – Selma spoke, highlighting that this ministry is in its 10th year. She encouraged folks to come and learn about knitting and the ministry, noting that they meet on Tuesday nights at 7pm.

**Still Waters** – Pastor Seth highlighted this ministry with trafficking victims, noting that although coordinator Jean Stockdale is working in Texas at this time, she is still a spiritual support for RCHP and is still with us.
RCHP-AHC – Pastor Seth noted that the AHC owns or oversees 23 properties and has a total of 113 tenants. Interfaith-RISE was added as a program of RCHP-AHC this year and now functions under its 501c3. This fits RCHP’s mission to support difficult-to-house individuals and families. He encouraged people that if they are interested in being on the Board, they meet on the third Tuesday of every month at 7pm.

Interfaith-RISE – Pastor Seth noted that I-RISE is getting increased attention for its work with refugees and asylees. I-RISE is now a state-department recognized resettlement site, and begun its official work this fall.

Global Grace Café – Pastor Seth noted that Better World Café shut down in 2016, and RCHP began a refugee-focused café, Global Grace. Refugee chefs prepare an entree from a different region of the world each day. Come eat and support the café!

DIRE – Pastor Seth reported on the creation of the Deportation and Immigration Response Equipo which provides an official emergency number and coalition for the region to respond to ICE activity.

Churches Improving Communities – Carrie Dirks reported on CIC programs, NeighborCorps Re-Entry Services, Churches Accomplishing Long Term Recovery, and Church Based Mental Health Services. She encouraged people to read the report for specific program accomplishments and thanked Deb Convery and Harry Pangemanan for their significant work with CALTR hurricane recovery. People were encouraged to volunteer and get involved.

Who is My Neighbor – Lara Arp reported, highlighting that over 150 family units have been served over the past year, and encouraged people to read the full report on program accomplishments.

Church Statistical Report: Pastor Seth spoke. He emphasized that although many things go on at the church all year, Sunday morning is important and fuels the rest of the work. There are 505 total members including adherents. He noted that the church received many new members this year. Fifteen years ago when they first started here, that number was just 68.

Financial Report: Charlie referenced the report and encouraged people to look at it more closely individually. He noted that the church is where it expected to be in terms of the budget.

Adjournment with Prayer and Benediction: – Pastor Seth ended the meeting with a prayer. A special thanks was given for Lisa Berman who runs the main office and is a great help to everyone who comes through the door and to the staff. The meeting was adjourned at 11:16 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Carrie Dirks Amodeo

Election of Elders and Deacons
Each year a number of Elders and Deacons ‘term off.’ At RCHP we have three-year terms for leadership, and, if it is the first time you’ve ever served, you can do a back-to-back term. This year we thank Colin Jager, Augus (Teddy) Assa and Anthony DiGrigoli for their terms as Deacons. We also thank Franco Juricic and Mary Caterson for their terms as Elders. We have
had incredible leadership of the church and much of the thanks goes to the people stepping off! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

In addition to the 5 changes in leadership indicated above we have recently elected Deb Convery and Cecilia Rowedder to fill uncompleted terms—Deb as an Deacon and Cecilia as an Elder.

Today, we recommend the following slate of nominees for Elder and Deacon.

We wish to remind all members of RCHP that all Consistory meetings are open meetings. You can always join us on the third Thursday of the month to stay up on the happenings of the church. Also, MOST IMPORTANTLY, the work of the committees is really where leadership happens. All members (and adherents who haven’t joined) are welcome to join Consistorial Committees. We would love your input on WORSHIP, FAITH DEVELOPMENT, PROPERTY, JUSTICE & MERCY, CARE OR FELLOWSHIP.

PASTORAL REPORT FOR SETH AND STEPHANIE
As we complete 17 years here as your pastors we are as thankful to God as ever that we were called to walk in newness of life with all of you! (Romans 6:4).

Church Outreach Born from Interesting Places…
from Politics…
2017-2018 has been another amazing year at RCHP. For us, personally, the year started with the unique experience of Seth running for governor of NJ—something that he felt called to do because of the experience of being a pastor in this church. RCHP has exposed us to the great variety of people and communities in NJ and has helped us to see things that are broken and could be redeemed. RCHP has led us to dream of solutions for a better Jersey (and world)—and in 2017 those dreams manifested in a political run. While the votes were not many (just over 10,000), the experience was a winning experience. For 12 months (from November 2016-November 2017) Seth had an opportunity to see a much wider picture of the NJ political and social landscape and imagine an “RCHP mentality” of peace and justice over the entire place. While there is nothing saying that the specific experience of running for governor will lead to specific future opportunities we are sure that the gains from one leader ‘spreading his wings’ are good for the church and its ministries. We also believe that RCHP has the power to encourage other members of our community to run for office. Seth is surely just the first of many shaped by RCHP who will run for elected office and try to bring the principals of the Kingdom of God to bear on society.

Wandering into Worship…prompted by hearing about God’s Spirit moving here…
2017-2018 has been another year of tremendous growth. On an average month 25 new people pass through our doors for worship, and many of them end up returning. With every new spirit that enters our congregation we are encouraged to listen to them and to see what God might be up to by bringing them here now. Growing our church is not about numerical growth—it is really about growth in the Spirit. The more people the Spirit of God is blowing through the better chance we have to respond faithfully.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Growth…a result of radical servanthood
2017-2018 has also been a high point for growth in ecumenical and interfaith connections. The vast majority of these connections come through the non-profit agencies and programs we have
created and support. Through refugee resettlement, re-entry work, rebuilding homes and other actions we do we find ourselves joining hands, and heads and hearts with people of faith from so many traditions.

**A Place to Push Back Against the Powers…**

2017-2018 has also been the year that our church has most clearly become a central NJ hub for social justice organizing. For years we have hosted social justice groups like, “Marc’s Coffee House,” but our added exposure from Seth’s political campaign, and Amos’ work with Solitary Confinement and the tremendous outreach of Cassandra Oliveras with our Justice and Mercy Committee, coupled with the media coverage of our immigration work, has made RCHP an assumed center for social justice action.

**Spiritual Growth for Long-Standing Members**

With all of the new faces in worship and in community, and with the new ecumenical/interfaith relationships and the social justice partnerships there is much to celebrate about our outreach! However, we think the thing that keeps the balance at RCHP is the commitment of the church to worship, education and fellowship.

If we were only impressive as an outreach organization, and not also as a place to be filled up, and encouraged to learn, and to pray, and to sing and to share opening and honestly we would not be doing the work of God. This is a place for all who come here—the broken and those who care for the broken—to become one in love. And, once we are here, we need to have opportunities to develop and deepen our lives with God and our siblings in faith.

We are so thankful for the bible studies, the Sunday School Classes, the Prayer Groups, the Coffee Hours, the Stephen Ministers, the pastoral care givers, the cooks…everyone who does the work of building up the community in love.

**Outreach and Community-Building Must ‘Kiss Each Other’?**

One of the beautiful new developments at RCHP this year was the ministry of ‘The Table’ and ‘Shilo.’ For many years now RCHP has had a Sunday night fellowship meal and ministry, but this year it seemed to streamline into something that was hugely successful and well attended. It seems that the formalization of the relationship between The Table and Shilo (outreach to the homeless) really worked. It was beautiful to see a ministry that combined outreach and ‘in-reach’ (community building).

It seems to us that what Sunday night holds might be a great model for other programs and groups at RCHP to follow. We need to continue getting to know each other, eating together, sharing together, working together…but we need to do so always with an open seat at the table. There may be ways for more of our ministries to start resembling something of the dynamics of The Table/Shilo.

Can we start home bible study groups? Can we start a ministry of dining together mid week? Can we form prayer groups that help people who are facing a shared issue? Can we do all these things with an eye toward getting to know others in the church and also with an eye toward reaching someone new? We think so—it works at The Table and Shilo.

**Contentment in Christ**

This continues to be a very troubling time in America. 2017-2018 has called for us to go through some heroic efforts to protect some of our friends from deportation. We know the damage that has been done to the children and families in our church due to family-breaking policies put out by the federal government.
But we remain, as a community, content in Christ. There is a manner in which we operate without fear even when there are a million things to fear. We do not back down, even when the forces against the way of love are very strong. We do not give up hope, even when things seem utterly hopeless.

To be content does not mean not to be angry. To be content does not mean to be okay with injustice. To be content just means that, come what may, we will say God raised Christ from the dead and God is raising the entire world up in newness!

As we enter the next year of RCHP’s life we are content in Christ. We are content knowing that God has called us, in Christ, to be part of the way God ushers in the new kingdom. We are content knowing that we both participate as servants and recipients of the promises.

Peace, Pastors Stephanie and Seth

Report from Pastor Amos May 2, 2018 “Breathing In and Breathing Out”

Balance is hard to find sometimes—especially when life is so full of tasks, opportunities, obligations and joys. A good friend of mine recently encouraged me to think about “balance” not as an act of holding multiple things at once, anxiously trying not to drop anything, but instead as the art of breathing in and breathing out. Balance might be hard, but breathing is much more manageable.

And the lived experience of breathing at RCHP, for me, means expending energy through planning, programming, organizing, and building; but then, it also means receiving energy from the collective work, worship, and fellowship as family of God and siblings in Christ.

This year has been a wonderful exercise in breathing, as I served the church by giving and receiving through the rich ministries of worship, youth programming, teaching, and other projects of our living, breathing church. Here are some of my ministry highlights from this year:

**Music Ministry**

We continue to grow and thrive in and through the congregational participation in our music ministries. Each month, our Sunday morning services are blessed through the music of our gospel choir, our adult chancel choir, our two youth choirs, our four praise teams, our Indonesian choir, and various special music offerings. I work closely with, and am deeply grateful to, our gospel music director Derek Cannon and our accompanist/choir director Ian Howells. Without these other brilliant leaders, my “breath” would be much less balanced.

Because the music is such a rich part of our worship experience, the worship committee decided to authorize the recording of a new worship album, and I worked closely with my friend Ethan Kattau to produce “You Are Hope,” a 15-track album that is now available for purchase.

This year, as a joint venture of the Faith Development and Worship Committees, we decided to offer a “Testimony through Word and Song” program during the adult education hour on the first Sunday of each month. This has been an incredibly powerful experience, as we learn how to listen for God’s voice in the testimonies of life and faith from members of our congregation. So far this year, we have learned from and grown through the spoken testimonies of Austin Morreale, Sonie Fredericks, Harry Pangemanan, Cori Anderson, April Humes, and Sunny Gandem; and we look forward to Richie Lord’s testimony next Sunday, May 13.
Each summer, I get to collaborate with Lara Arp in contributing to our end-of-summer Vacation Bible School program, by writing and directing a musical. This year, we wrote “The Toolbox Tale,” which focused on identifying the gifts God gives each of us for the building projects of peace, justice, and compassion. This continues to be one of the highlights of my year, and a very rewarding experience of breathing in and out.

I jokingly refer to myself as the informal RCHP “I.T. Department.” But in reality, this is another ministry that I help lead on behalf of the audio and visual needs of the church. I make the service slides, set up the sound system, and provide technical support for groups renting the facilities. I’m grateful for Jonah Giacalone for the incredible services he renders on Sunday morning with sound and sermon recording. Also a big thanks to the youth who regularly assist with running the projected slides: Benjamin Giacalone, Amber Wagner, Jocelyn Pangemanan, Christa Pangemanan, and Angela Tuwo have been exceptionally helpful. Harry and Jocelyn have also recently been helping me with sound set-up, especially on Sundays I am absent.

Youth Ministry
The high school youth group got a lot smaller after we celebrated the graduation of 6 seniors last year. It’s easy to look at a smaller group and assume it is a harbinger of a dwindling ministry, but in our case, this would be untrue. A smaller youth group has afforded the opportunity to “dive deeper” into social and spiritual topics, engaging each student more intentionally.

Each month, the high school youth group pursues healthy balance between lowpressure experiences of having fun, deeper engagement with serious topics, and faith expression. Topics that we’ve covered this year include hopes/fears, trust & friendship, peacemaking, compassion & service, self-acceptance, relationships & dating, simplicity, and learning to find our voices for advocacy.

Some highlights of this year in high school youth group include a Summer Lock-In, creating and facilitating a Halloween Escape Room Experience, selling sandwiches at the Holiday Bazaar, a Winter Lock-In, leading the entire midnight Christmas Eve service (with beautiful sermons by Justin Sargent and Amber Wagner), a snow tubing trip to Mountain Creek, and a High School Retreat (this weekend) near the state parks of Northern NJ.

I’m grateful for the opportunity to work with Lara Arp, Wendy Jager, and Anthony DiGrigoli, all of whom lend invaluable support to the planning, programming, and reflection on the youth ministry. Anthony, as my steady volunteer assistant, is especially vital to our church’s impactful ministry with high schoolers.

Teaching
I work with Pastors Stephanie and Seth, as well as a good number of guest teachers, to lead a year-long confirmation class for the younger teens at RCHP. This year, eleven students journeyed with us through the most central aspects of our Christian faith: Creator God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, sin and salvation, the Church, the sacraments, and the Christian life. These students, with the help of adult mentors from the church, are nearly finished writing their Personal Faith Statements, which will reflect their individual faith experiences as
articulated through their involvement in the larger body of Christ. They will be sharing these statements during worship on Confirmation Sunday, which is May 20.

I enjoy preaching, although it a discipline I’m continuing to develop. The senior pastors have been gracious to ask me to preach roughly every two months, which feels like a good, balanced rhythm.

Other Things in Amos’s Life
The rhythms of lived breathing extend beyond my official capacities as Associate Pastor here at RCHP, and since we are family, I’ll take a moment and share some of the other exciting things I am lucky to be involved in:

Firstly and most importantly, I am a partner to a very gracious and thoughtful person, Sarah Trovato Caley—and this August 13 we will celebrate our lucky 13th wedding anniversary. I am a proud parent of Leo, who just turned 3 years old this week. Sarah and I are excited also to welcome the newest member of our family later in 2018! We are expecting a new baby, due in late October.

Secondly, I am the state organizer for the New Jersey Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (NJ-CAIC). In our effort to end state-sponsored torture in all NJ jails and prisons, we have drafted a very powerful bill and constructed a detailed strategic plan for supporting its passage into law this year. My responsibilities for this organization include managing weekly communication with members and prospective members, holding monthly NJ-CAIC member meetings at the ACLU in Newark, holding monthly gatherings of our Survivors’ Bureau, managing a website and our list serves, writing grant proposals and spending reports, organizing public education events, and coordinating outreach efforts from faith communities to legislators.

Criminal justice reform at all levels is a topic I’ve worked on for several years, so I welcome opportunities to learn about and teach on mass incarceration and related topics. This year, I taught an adult education program at All Saints Episcopal Church and spoke at three prison-related forums. I also facilitated four daylong workshops throughout the year for social workers on “Incarceration and New Jersey Families” through Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care.

Ultimately, the breathing of this church is what empowers so many of its members to breathe the Spirit of God, in and out, in all the balancing acts of our lives. I find myself constantly grateful for the opportunity to serve this church, and to be nourished by this church, in turn. May this everlasting life continue to enrich and sustain all of our ministries this coming year!

RCHP Committee Reports

Faith Development Annual Report May 2017 – April 2018
Committee Members – Lara Arp, Amos Caley, Deb Convery, Carrie Dirks, Wendy Jager, Austin Morreale and Carol Turner
This past year has been another year of growth as more and more people find their way to one or more of our faith development programs at RCHP. Our large number of committed and talented volunteers and the staff (Amos, Lara and Wendy) plan and work year-round to keep this happening.

**Each Sunday Morning**

**Sunday School** – With thanks, praise and a lot of engaged teachers, Sunday school at RCHP is thriving. This year we had 7 different classes for children and youth ages 2 through high school. Please join me in giving our deep and heartfelt thanks to another group of 19 excellent teachers: Cyndy Reames, Gail Green, Tracy Cangiano, Michelle Tanasy, Alicia Greenwald, Wendy Nussman, Sarah MacKinnon, Linda St. Pierre, Emily Adams, Klaas Walhout, Theo Campbell, Grace Laloan, Renee Digrigoli, Wendy Jager, Nate Brantingham, Elaine Nguyen, Franco Juricic, Danielle and Chris Willard-Kyle. Their commitment and intentionality in exploring, retelling and discussing the stories of our faith provides a spiritual foundation for over 100 children.

We continued Sunday school through July once again this past year combining classes for the summer. The children are glad that meeting weekly in Sunday school with their friends continues into the summer months. We will continue Sunday school through July this summer as well. In order for the year-round teachers to take a well-deserved break, we will need strong congregational volunteer support for this.

**Adult Education** – Under the leadership of Lara Arp and student intern Chris Palmer RCHP offers 2 adult education options each week. Chris led a weekly Sunday morning Bible study and Lara continues to organize the topic based adult education class.

In an effort to grow closer to each other and learn from each other’s faith journeys the faith development committee and the worship committee incorporated a “Testimony through word and song” time to each month. Generally, on the first Sunday of each month, a congregant shares and element of their faith journey with the congregation in the sanctuary. Amos and Deb have worked song and liturgy into this time of sharing, creating beautiful moments of faith and worship as we hear each other’s stories. The 2nd Sunday of the month has been led by one of the pastors and focuses on an element of Reformed theology. With an ever-expanding congregation and people from different backgrounds, this has been a good moment to explore and explain elements of what makes RCHP unique. The last 2 Sundays of the class continue to be reserved for thematic, topical studies. We will continue this format into the coming year.

**Children’s Worship** – Each week children from 3 years – 2nd grade experience God in children’s worship. This takes place in the parlor while the sermon is delivered. Children’s worship is a just that – a time of worship and practice learning about worship that prepares our youngest ones for our corporate worship life. Each week, in those 20 minutes, the children practice their own order of worship which includes many of the same elements we use in corporate worship: gathering, liturgy, songs, memory verse, lesson and prayers of the people. The leaders also pay special attention to the liturgical seasons and sacraments of the church, teaching each as they arise in the course of the year. Children’s worship happens twice each Sunday and is led by Lara Arp. We are also grateful for the support of all the seminary interns: Emily Adams, Nate Brantingham, Chris Palmer and Elaine Nguyen, as well as Wendy Nussman and Carol Turner.

**Nursery** - We continue to provide nursery care during both services and are thankful to JoAnn Kafka for her continued work during 1st service. She is assisted each week by a congregant volunteer and 2 congregant volunteers cover 2nd service nursery. 16 different volunteers assist
with nursery on a monthly basis. Thank you to Sena and Leah Kaper-Dale, Yvonne and Sonia Kalinda, Sarah and Ava MacKinnon, Alicia Greenwald, Diane and Madison Fisher, Penelope and Isabella Cruz, Nimi Thomas, Katherine Adenji, Cori Anderson, Kathy Malkiewicz, and Sarah Caley. Additional thanks go to Sarah Caley for managing the volunteer schedule.

**Children’s Library** – The Children’s Library is located in room 107 off the social hall. The library serves as a resource for children, parents and teachers. Our collection focuses on Bible stories, biographies of people of faith and world religions, as well as such topics such as peace, prayer, gratitude and immigration.

**Each Week Throughout the School Year**

**Sunday Nigh Youth Programs** - Amos Caley, Lara Arp and Wendy Jager lead three different youth programs each Sunday night. With the help of 5 committed volunteers from the congregation, 8 of us set aside time for fellowship, games, discussion and service each Sunday from 7 – 8:00 p.m. and 7 – 8:30 p.m. (the high school group). In total, there are anywhere from 35 – 50 kids participating each Sunday evening.

**Kids in the Cave(KITC)** – Kids in the Cave is our youngest youth group. 4th and 5th graders meet in the basement of the church and our typical evening consists of: free time, service work, group games, gratitude journaling, discussion and prayer. We continue to sort all the terra cycle items dropped off at the church each week, as our ongoing service project. Topics that the kids enjoyed this year were “dealing with jealousy”, “good choices” and our “introvert/extrovert” quiz. KITC participated in the Interfaith RISE walk-a-thon this past fall and raised $1,000 in donations for refugee resettlement. Deep appreciation and thanks go to April and Virgil Humes as volunteer co-leaders with Wendy Jager for committing to this group of kids for yet another year.

**Middle School Youth Group** – The Middle School youth group is co-led by Danielle and Chris Willard-Kyle and Lara Arp. 25 kids are part of this group with any one evening seeing 12 – 15 in attendance. The group went on two retreats (one in the fall and one in the spring) at Cross Roads Retreat Center this year. The Middle Schoolers once again ministered to us, as a congregation, by creating a station on how we view our bodies for the Easter Labyrinth. Other topics and events throughout the year focused on how one’s faith influences the way we engage with our communities and world.

**High School Youth Group** – Please see Amos Caley’s report.

**Confirmation Class** – Please see Amos Caley’s report.

**Weekly Bible Studies** – 2 weekly Bible studies provide congregants a chance to study the Bible together with one of our pastors. Thank you, Pastors Seth and Stephanie for leading the 7:45 a.m. Wednesday Bible study and the 10:00 a.m. Friday Bible study, respectively.

**Prayer and Meditation Group** - The Tuesday Night Prayer and Meditation Group meets in the prayer chapel from 7:00-8:00pm. This spiritual formation group supports RCHP members through prayer and meditation traditions. Under the leadership of Deb Convery and Carol Turner, 4 to 7 core members meet weekly in person to pray together and 22 members receive weekly email requests for shared prayer and meditation. The format for each meeting is structured: introduction of participants with shared prayers of thanks and petition; a specific prayer or meditation practice (as described below) for 20-30minutes, and a closing prayer.
Each week focuses on a particular aspect of prayer or meditation: First Tuesday of the month: ministry of cards and prayer for recipients (Milagros Aquayo); second Tuesday of the month: guided meditation (Deb Convery); third Tuesday of the month: Chanting Meditation (April Humes) or Centering prayer (Carol Turner); and Fourth Tuesday of the month: walking meditation in the church sanctuary (Kathleen Malkiewicz). The fifth Tuesday of the month allows for a special prayer or meditation event (often praying with color). Thank you to all the leaders mentioned above. If further information is needed or you would like to join, please contact Deb Convery or Carol Turner. Submitted by Carol Turner.

**Additional Faith Development Events and Opportunities**

**Women’s Covenant Group** - 2017 saw a shift in focus for the Women’s Covenant Group from monthly gatherings to occasional outings and connection opportunities beyond the walls of RCHP. In June, we visited the Unity Spiritual Center in Asbury, NJ experiencing their outdoor prayer labyrinth, engaging in guided meditation and sharing a picnic meal. In the Fall, Deb Convery participated in the RCA (Reformed Church in America – Women’s Transformation & Leadership) Women’s Sankofa, a bus journey through NJ and NY with a focus on social justice. RCHP was a host stop along the way, with another highlight being Project Hospitality in Staten Island NY, led by Director and former RCHP seminary intern, Karen Jackson. Deb also traveled to Oman in the Middle East, another RCA initiative hosted by the Al Amana Centre. This female-centric journey focused on Muslim-Christian relations and understanding, as well as cultural differences and similarities through a feminine-focused lens. For more information about this these types of event or opportunities for women contact Deb Convery at Deborah.convery@gmail.com. In Christ Sophia, Deb Convery

**Mom’s Covenant Group** – 2017 also saw a shift in the Mom’s Covenant Group. We met a few times in the fall but the numbers were such that it seemed best to set this idea aside for the moment. Thank you to Renee DiGrigoli for her efforts and enthusiasm here.

**Vacation Bible School** – Once again VBS was an overwhelming hit. “Under Construction” was the theme and the church and community enjoyed “Toolbox Tale” written by our own Amos Caley and Ian Howells.

**Advent Preparation Night** - This annual event continues to be well attended and consists of a joint potluck with The Table, devotions, crafting advent wreaths, singing carols and sending cards to detainees and shut-ins.

**Christmas Pageant** – The Christmas pageant was a collaborative effort; thanks to the many parents who organized costumes and parts.

**Easter Labyrinth** – Our annual Easter Labyrinth was called “This is My Body” bringing awareness to the different parts of our physical bodies and aspects of our life together as the body of Christ. At least 130 people participated in either walking the labyrinth or creating a station in it.

**Looking Ahead** – As we continue to experience steady growth in our children’s programs and in our church, more and more committed congregant volunteers are needed. This past year we have welcomed a large number of Highland Park community children to our Sunday school and youth programs from China. More time or intentionality spent on making connections with new groups of people, as well as strengthening the connections within the church through faith development offerings is an area that can always use more attention.
Respectfully submitted by,
Wendy Jager
Faith Development Chair and Minister of Children’s Ministries

Fellowship Committee Annual Report
May 2017- May 2018

The fellowship committee coordinates events and opportunities that allow church members to strengthen their connections with each other. We are grateful for the following events that have happened this year:

Coffee Hour is hosted each week, including purchasing, set up and clean up.

Senior Prayer Breakfast is held on the third Friday of each month.

In celebration of the gift of baptism, Cakes are provided by the committee.

Upon request, Flowers are placed in the sanctuary in memory or celebration of loved ones.

The Mother’s Day Brunch and Father’s Day Picnic & Ultimate Frisbee Game were wonderful celebrations again this year.

In July, we hosted a church-wide Softball Game at Johnson Park.

The Tower Thrift Shop participated in this year’s Town-Wide Yard Sale. Many items were sold and many people learned about the on-going work of the Thrift Shop.

In September, we enjoyed 2 days and 1 night at Voorhees State Park for the Camping Trip.

In gratitude for all of creation, a Pet Blessing was held in October.

The annual Halloween Party was a celebration for church members and community members alike.

The Holiday Bazaar, coordinated by Illona Faust, Beth Laurano, Maria Austin and Suzanne Kucsma, was a great success.

Advent Preparation Night, a joint event hosted by The Table and the Fellowship and Faith Development Committees, included a potluck dinner, advent wreath making, card writing and caroling.

A Senior Outing in December brought a group out for lunch and to a beautiful concert at Princeton Theological Seminary.

A Nature Hike in December included leaving edible ornaments in the woods for animals to enjoy.

We celebrated the Christmas season with Christmas Caroling for our homebound seniors.

The Children’s Christmas Pageant was celebrated with a Cast Party.

Poinsettias adorned our sanctuary in December.
We had a wonderful **Easter Egg Hunt and Party**.

We hosted the potluck dinner on **Maundy Thursday**.

**Easter Flowers** graced our sanctuary on Easter Sunday.

Twice in the past year, a offering of pet supplies and monetary donations was collected for the **Humane Society**.

The committee has begun offering **Name Tags** occasionally on Sundays.

Sunny Gamden and Anthony DiGrigoli continue to work on updating the **Online Photo Directory**.

**Justice & Mercy Annual Report: May 2017-April 2018**

**Site Visit to ISLES Training Center:**
In June 2017, Deb Convery went on a site visit to Isles Training center with leadership from NeighborCorps and Greenfaith. These environmentally innovative trainings may be ideal for a NeighborCorps client.

**Bread for the World Lobby Day:** On June 13, a group led by Cathy Stanford traveled to D.C. to attend this galvanizing event focusing on Global Food Security and Summer Food Programs for U.S. Children. In between services on June 11, we hosted an “Empty Plate” activity as part of a global Social Media Campaign for ending Hunger.

**150 Years is Enough Rally to Close Jamesburg:**
On June 28, two full vans from RCHP went to the Jamesburg youth correction facility in Monroe to participate in the campaign for its closing, led by the NJ Institute for Social Justice. Prior to his departure, Gov. Christie announced that Jamesburg would be closing; to date it remains fully operational.

**Mission & Justice Breakfast with Tim Tenclay:**
On August 6, this informative breakfast featured Rev. Tim Tenclay speaking about the Refugee Crisis in Italy. Approximately 30 members of the church community were in attendance. RCHP supports the Tenclay’s missions each year.

**Vigil for Peace:**
On August 13, RCHP partnered with ACLU People Power and NAACP to host a vigil in response to the events in Charlottesville. Nearly 600 were in attendance, including members of several faith communities and elected officials. We are grateful to have worked together, and this will be the first of more collaborations to come.

**Monthly Dawn Vigils at Elizabeth Detention Center:**
On the third Monday of each month, a small group has gathered at RCHP at 4:15am to hold vigil and bear witness at Elizabeth Detention center from 5-6am, the hour in which airport transfer of immigrants being deported is very likely to occur. Nobuko Hori has led these groups in meditation on site.

**Disaster Relief Benefit Concert on October 7:**
RCHP organized a concert to benefit disaster relief in Puerto Rico, Mexico and Dominica featuring 7 diverse dance and musical acts. Together we raised approx. $4600 (online & at
event) that was split three ways, and approximately 200 were in attendance. The goods collected for Dominica were dropped off at Queens for shipment to Salisbury. Special thanks to Elsie Foster-Dublin, Tracey O'Reggio Clarke, and the entire J & M committee for their invaluable help in making this happen!

**Bag it Screening on October 14:**
Co-sponsored by Sustainable Highland Park and Greenfaith Circle of Raritan River Valley, this screening promoted a campaign to reduce plastic bag usage. The event was well attended by the local community and stimulated high engagement and conversation beyond the use of plastic bags.

**Together to End Solitary Campaign:**
RCHP participated in the “Together to End Solitary” Campaign, which involved hosting events on the 23rd of every month representing the 23 hours individuals are held each day in confinement. On October 23, a group of 10 gathered in Monument Square in Downtown New Brunswick for an outdoor lunchtime intervention. Individuals took turns distributing literature and holding up the structure of the pop up solitary cell - built by Susan Boscorino- as well as distributing informational literature on Solitary.

**Letter Writing Campaign for Jamesburg Youth Facility for Boys:**
In October and November, RCHP collected approximately 120 letters for the boys at Jamesburg. Thank you to everyone who stopped by after services to contribute as well as the middle school and high school youth groups.

**National Religious Campaign Against Torture:** RCHP is a “participatory congregation” in NRCAT’S campaigns, which works to end torture in four primary areas, including in U.S. prison and detention facilities. Pastor Seth currently serves as President of their Board of Directors. During the January 13 service, congregants took turns reading the names of the 41 who remain detained at Guantanamo as part of NRCAT’s observance of the facility’s 16th anniversary.

**Windows of Understanding in New Brunswick and Highland Park, January 15 through Feb 15:**
Church Based Mental Health Services and D.I.R.E. were among the organizations featured in this public art initiative that paired artists with non-profit organizations to promote compassion and understanding around a wide array of social justice issues.

**Ash Wednesday Vigil for Immigrants and Refugees at Elizabeth Detention Center on Feb 14:**
Inter-faith vigil sponsored by First Friends, Pax Christi NJ, The Elizabeth Coalition, and St. Joseph Social Service Center. Ashes were distributed at this special service, followed by a soup supper at St. Joseph’s Social Service Center at which a representative from DIRE presented.

**“End Torture, End Solitary Confinement”: Free Public Education Event on Sun, Feb 25 from 3-6pm**
Through his work with NJCAIC, Pastor Amos organized a galvanizing conference at Rutgers Newark on Feb 25 focused on ending Solitary Confinement. The event featured testimonies from survivors, statements from legislators, and a Virtual Reality solitary cell.

**Life, Death, Life Again:**
On April 12 this play produced by CoLAB Arts was presented at RCHP in collaboration with several local groups including Neighborcorps and Who is My Neighbor. This verbatim theatre
piece shared the stories of people sentenced to die in prison for violent crimes committed as children. It was followed by a reception and panel discussion.

**Advocacy for Racial Impact Statement Legislation in NJ:**
RCHP was part of a coalition advocating for this important legislation in our state, which has the highest racial disparity for sentencing in the nation. In January, it was passed by the Senate and Assembly with overwhelming bipartisan support and authorizes racial and ethnic impact statements for proposed criminal justice policies.

**Interfaith RISE:** IRISE, after being an agency set to receive 50 refugees/year, has now been approved to receive 100 this year! It is unlikely that the number will be reached because of factors outside of our control (federal reductions). However, being approved for 100 means Interfaith-RISE is appreciated for its growing capacity. (See Interfaith-RISE Report)

**DIRE:** This rapid response team remains essential in its vigilance to respond to the needs of immigrants in crisis. Recent new initiatives include Courthouse monitoring in North Brunswick and “know your rights” literature distribution in New Brunswick and Highland Park, done in partnership with New Labor.

**A Little Change for a Big Change:** The committee has continued this monthly program in which a group or cause is highlighted during service, and small donations may be made as a way of appreciating and recognizing their significant work. Among this year’s recipients were World Renew, Interfaith Rise, Haiti Housing Materials, and New Labor.

**Missionary Support:** RCHP continues to financially contribute to missionaries of the Reformed Church in America. RCHP supports The Vis Family in Palestine/Israel, Peter and Patty Ford in Lebanon and the TenClay family in Palermo, Sicily. In addition RCHP sends a yearly contribution to a women/child center in Indonesia. Each Contribution is approximately $1200.

**Sanctuary/Legal Support:** After Harry Pangemanan was nearly arrested by Immigration in January the community of Highland Park, the state of New Jersey and even out-of-state funders rushed to support our immigrant community. Nearly $40,000 came into the church, mainly from outside sources, which we are using for legal defense of some families, to help pay rent of other families (with detained breadwinners) and to cover other necessary fees for people put in a precarious financial position due to the behavior of our federal government.

**LOOKING AHEAD:**
We will continue to expand and deepen our work in the following areas:

- Prison work and ministries including detention, incarceration, and solitary confinement issues
- Environmental Issues through the newly renamed Care and Creation Committee
- Immigration Issues

The following events are currently being planned:

- Support for the Poor People’s campaign
- Stream Clean Up
- Screening of Film about Homelessness
• Canoe trip to Pinelands

Property Report May 2017 – May 2018
Prepared by Harry Pangemanan and Anthony DiGrigoli

Committee Members: Harry Pangemanan, Anthony DiGrigoli, Lara Arp, Sylvia Hove.

We praise and thank God and as a church for all people. Our entire building and property is a place where many people receive a blessing from God. Individuals and small and large groups travel in and out from our property and used our property to get care, help, practice their beliefs, and feel safe and welcomed.

Also we give thanks to God that our entire building is always open to anybody, our building is a temporary shelter for people when weather is not too friendly, and a temporary shelter for people whose homes have become unsafe.

Here is all the work and care that our committee has done since May of last year:

- Pay close attention to things that can inhibit the everyday activities and take action to avoid any problems before they start.
- Walk through every day to check that everything is working.
- Communication with others to learn of any concerns that they might have.
- Hand dryers installed in the 2 bathrooms.
- In the process of converting oil to gas heat.
- Replace the smaller fridge in the kitchen.
- Our community garden has opened with new plants, benches, a quiet sitting and resting area and a GaGa Ball pit is being installed. Thanks to Sylvia and Lara for making this dream a reality and Harry for his help in prepping the area for this project.

Below is the list of work that has been done and some that is still in progress:

- Recommendation to purchase a bike rack for the property has passed and we are awaiting purchase and installation.
- Bike rack will be installed on the property this Spring.
- Would like more people to join Property Committee
- More painting is to be scheduled for the Social Hall, Sanctuary, etc.

Respectfully Submitted
Harry Pangemanan, Anthony DiGrigoli

Worship Committee Annual Report June 2017 - May 2018

Worship Staff: Senior Pastors Stephanie and Seth Kaper-Dale and Worship Pastor Amos Caley provide the central planning and communication around worship services each week, but we also are richly blessed with an assortment of other gifted staff who provide leadership in our worship services, including Pastor Henny Rumagit, Pastor Lara Arp, Patrick Beckford, and Pastor Ben Rivera (who recently transitioned with his family to provide worship leadership elsewhere). Derek Cannon is our Director of Gospel Ministry, and Ian Howells is our Accompanist and
Chancel Choir Director. Both Derek and Ian are essential in providing support to Amos through rehearsals and Sunday morning leadership.

**Children’s Choirs:** First Voices (pre-K to 2nd grade) and Voices of Praise (3rd to 6th grade) are our children’s vocal choirs. Pastor Seth leads First Voices, which meets during Sunday School twice per month. Pastor Amos leads Voices of Praise, which meets in the RCHP Sanctuary each Wednesday from 5:00 to 5:30pm. Both choirs are incorporated in worship at least once a month. This year, we added another children’s choir under the leadership of Lara Arp, called Movement of Praise, which incorporates liturgical dance into our worship each season.

**Gospel Choir:** Our Gospel Choir meets for rehearsals on Wednesday evenings in the Sanctuary, from 6:30 to 7:30. It continues to be very well attended under Derek’s leadership and Ian’s accompaniment. Derek has been urging us to connect emotionally and spiritually with the songs, and both the rehearsals and the Sunday singing have benefited from this beautiful form of communal prayer. The Gospel Choir usually leads songs two Sundays per month, with three songs distributed between those Sundays.

**Chancel Choir:** Our Chancel Choir meets for rehearsals on Wednesday evenings in the Sanctuary, from 7:30 to 8:30. Ian Howells directs and accompanies the choir, and rehearsals are a fun way of connecting to sacred music and other choir members. Our song selections range widely in their styles, sounds, and levels of difficulty, but no experience is required for attendance. We learn and grow together on a weekly basis. The Chancel Choir usually leads at least one song during three Sundays per month.

**Praise Teams:** RCHP has four different and diverse praise teams, with 29 different musicians and vocalists distributed between them. Each team is assigned one Sunday per month, and they rehearse the Wednesday prior to their scheduled Sunday, from 8:30 to 9:15pm in the Sanctuary. We enjoy working with a range of styles and songs, with a focus toward leading sung-prayers in the context of the flow of each service. Our church is richly blessed with talent, diversity, and generosity, and the Praise Teams reflect this great wealth each week.

**Technical Support:** RCHP is very fortunate to have faithful and competent volunteers who help with the technical aspects of the worship services. Helping Pastor Amos with the sound and projector slides each week is Jonah Giacalone and his son Benjamin. Also assisting consistently are Amber Wagner, Jocelyn Pangemanan, Christa Pangemanan, Angela Tuwo, and occasional help from other middle schooler, high schoolers, and young adults. Jonah also provides crucial support in recording each sermon and uploading it to the website every week.

**New Worship Album:** This year, we undertook the project of recording another worship album, as a follow-up to the 2013 album “You Are Love.” Recorded over the span of three days, and with the guidance and direction of Amos’ friend Ethan Kattau, we recorded a 15-track album.
called “You Are Hope.” It features the wide range of musical offerings springing from this church, and it is available for purchase through Pastor Amos or Lisa in the church office.

**Care Committee Annual Report (May 1 2017 – April 30 2018)**

Thank you God for all of the wonderful ways – too many to begin to count - in which we care for each other in this congregation. This congregation truly puts God’s love into action every day.

- **The Bereavement Calendar Project** continues to be coordinated by Cyndy Reames. Church Members submit the names of loved ones that have passed on, and on that month we mention those names honoring and remembering them. We read this as part of the Communion Liturgy.
- **The Card Ministry** continues to be carried out each month by the members of the Prayer and Meditation group.
- **Childcare** support was offered by Diane Wagner in this past year. We are grateful for her work in coordinating childcare for a church family following a serious illness.
- **Meals**: We are grateful that Liz Townley stepped up and is energetically coordinating this ministry. Whether it’s the arrival of a new baby, a surgery or injury, a caring congregant will cook a meal for those who need a break.
- **Pastoral Care Associate** Patrick Beckford has been visiting those who are less mobile or are in a rehab facility. Some Sundays he brings the gifts of communion or healing oils. He always brings his smile.
- **Peer Led Support Group** continues to meet two times a week. Attendance is steady under the leadership of Jess Munger and Terrance Horyn.
- **Praying after worship**: We are grateful for the availability of Elders and others to pray in the Prayer Chapel. And to Carrie Dirks for coordinating this important ministry.
- **Stephen Ministry** is entering its seventh year. We are grateful to Franco Juricic, Anthony DiGrigoli, John Rametta and Cathy Stanford for their leadership of the Stephen Ministry program. Cathy Stanford concluded her service as she prepares to move this spring. We are grateful for all she has contributed to this program over the years. The close-knit team of Stephen Ministers typically meets twice a month for continuing education and supportive supervision. In this past year -
  - We’ve been blessed with 12 active Stephen Ministers; 10 are currently in ongoing caregiving relationships which meet weekly.
  - In June we commissioned five new Stephen Ministers after they completed a comprehensive 50-hour training course.
  - In the past year, 8 new caregiving relationships started.
- **Visitation Team**: Carol Turner, Carol and Charlie Page continue to visit Dick Chant, Kathryn Sinclair, and Joan McMahon each month.

**Tower Thrift Shop Report – Submitted by Frank Corcoran**

The Tower Thrift Shop currently has 12 volunteers, 4 of which are cashiers. Our volunteers help by sorting clothes, and keeping the store clean. Our one volunteer, Lin Chan, is especially
helpful by cleaning the Thrift Shop floors each week with sweeping and mopping. We are open for business 31 hours per week; 1,612 hours a year. We ended 2016 bringing in $21,626.53 in additional income to the church. The Thrift Shop also helps needy families by selling items at a very low cost or by giving them for free.

**Highland Park Reformed Church Sewing Circle Yearly Report 2016**

Our sewing group meets every Thursday to sew and have lunch. We are six ladies strong, one regular visitor and one now in Assisted Living.

Most of our handmade items are sold at the Bazaar. We also had two very productive sales at Sunrise Assisted Living Home.

We support a seven year old girl through Compassion International with monthly and holiday gifts.

We purchased new tables for the Quilt Room.

Janet Peterson

**Prayer Shawl Ministry**

Prayer Shawl Ministry group began in August, 2008, with a group of women, (and for a while one man) who wanted to reach out to share the compassion and the love felt in their hearts for those needing comfort. Both members and non-members of RCHP, we combine knitting and crocheting into a prayerful ministry and spiritual practice. Our focus is to reach out to those in need of solace, as well as in celebration and joy. Many blessings are prayed into every shawl as it is being created. Upon completion, the group prays a final blessing into each shawl before it is sent on its way to convey God's love.

2018 marks ten years of Ministry for this group and we have presented hundreds of shawls to people in and out of our congregation. Many recipients have expressed deep gratitude for the gift of the shawl and the awareness of caring that it has brought to their lives. Our membership numbers have fluctuated widely throughout these ten years and at present we are a small handful of crafters who continue making these beautiful shawls. We would gratefully welcome new members as our concern is to always have a shawl ready and waiting for someone in need.

We meet each week on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm in the Parlor and are always looking for new people to join our group. We help each other in designing and crafting the shawls while we enjoy the gift of friendship and community. We have received generous donations of yarn which is always available. If anyone wants to join us, we love teaching knitting or crocheting to anyone who wants to learn. Or if you would prefer to work at home, that works as well.

**Report on Local Indonesian Immigration Crisis: Actions in the Past Year**

In addition to the work RCHP does on behalf of all immigrants and refugees we have a special calling to serve the Indonesian Christian community of Central New Jersey. God has put that community before us for the past 17 years, and we have had many iterations of providing support, care and radical action. RCHP has 45 church members who are Indonesian and we have close relationships with 7 other Indonesian congregations in the area. Also, since 2009, the protections that have been afforded to Indonesians in New Jersey who had Final Orders of Deportation have come through our work as a congregation.
When President Trump became president one of the first executive orders he signed was called “The Security of the Interior.” It became clear to us that it was possible that order might lead to the undoing of long-standing promises made between our church and ICE. We sought answers from ICE leadership in Newark and Washington but we were not given any answers. Instead, as Indonesians tried to stay faithful to the reporting structure laid forth by ICE, ICE’s response was to incarcerate and deport.

Last year, in late May, 4 Indonesians who we cared for very much were detained and then deported.

The Friday before Father’s Day, 2017, Senator Menendez and Congressman Pallone invited us to the U.S. Capitol, with one of the youth whose father was deported, to speak to congress and the media. 15 members of RCHP attended this very moving hearing.

Throughout the summer RCHP pushed the Indonesian Refugee Family Protection Act, attempting to get congress members to express concern for Indonesians in crisis. We introduced this bill back in 2011 and it has appeared before three sessions of congress.

In the fall of 2017 RCHP took into sanctuary Arthur Jemmy. This was the first time since 2013 that we had engaged in sanctuary. By December of 2017 we had added Johannes Tasik to the community in sanctuary.

The last week of January, 2018, ICE attempted to take Harry Pangemanan into detention. ICE successfully nabbed two local fathers who were also taking their kids to school. Harry managed to get into Sanctuary, where, within 4 hours of arriving, he and his family and the others in sanctuary were greeted by the newly elected governor, Phil Murphy.

From November 2017-January 2018 RCHP worked hard to encourage the American Civil Liberties Union to take up the cause of Indonesians in NJ. The events of late January solidified our relationship with ACLU. By the first week of February a class action suit had been filed and all Indonesians protected.

This issue is far from resolved, but incredible strides have been made to bring safety to the families we care so much about.

RCHP, continue to pray about these matters.

Peace, Pastor Seth

SHILO

In 2018-2018 RCHP partnered extensively with Shilo, a ministry for and with the homeless of New Brunswick, founded and led by Walter Herres. Walter has developed a team of leaders, some from RCHP, to head this very important program. Here is his report.

In respect to being part of the extended Reformed Church of Highland Park family, SHILO has been able to create avenues of charitable hunger relief. For instance, Shilo reached out to Hilton Embassy Suites Executive Chef to receive weekly delivery of catered platters. In addition, successful outreach has led to donations from Gerlandas Pizza, Krispy Pizza and Starbucks. Other local businesses will be approached in the year ahead.
Shilo's ability to help people directly serve impoverished communities has led to tremendous volunteer engagement. Volunteer coalitions of multiple interfaith groups, Middlesex County College and Rutgers University clubs, sororities and fraternities have expanded SHILO service from weekends only into a nearly 7 days a week operation.

Over the last year SHILO has lead numerous volunteer opportunities for youth groups, Sandy Relief work groups and other groups that have come to RCHP.

Shilo has also worked to advocate with New Brunswick City Council to put in place a Municipal ID program

Another feature of SHILO is our direct referrals to NeighborCorp Re-entry follow up and also our ability to provide ongoing resources and quality of care with toiletries, clothing and food.

SHILO, in partnership with the Table, co-hosts a monthly community dinner with clothing for those in need, food for all, and entertainment. SHILO also is having its 3rd biweekly breakfast in New Brunswick later this May. Additionally, SHILO will be receiving a public health intern to expand outreach for vulnerable populations.

In essence through SHILO's unique outreach we have been able to increase the quality of life of countless individuals and transition many homeless into shelters or permanent housing.

Sincerely, Walter Herres
Executive Director, Shilo
shilonewjersey@gmail.com

The Table – Submitted by Nathaniel Brantingham

The Table is a unique ministry which has a very broad footprint. Among other things, The Table is a place where:

• Food insecure in Highland Park can get a fantastic home-cooked meal
• People who are more high-need can get access to community and services
• RCHP members who want to engage in community outreach can plug in
• Community is built across all divisions, be it gender, socio-economic, or any other
• The bible can be studied with a focus on the big picture
• Other social engagement can be launched
• Middlesex Community College students learning about non profits
• Basic life skills like cooking and nutrition can be taught
• Voice is given to the voiceless in open mics
• People receive ongoing pastoral care
• RCHP can connect to other social ministries, especially Shilo and homeless outreach

The Table is at its best when it can bridge the most divides. It can be a challenging ministry, partially because it aims to do so much, but it's also a place where the Holy Spirit is alive and
well, reaching out from RCHP to touch the Highland Park community. For many who engage in The Table, this is their only contact point for RCHP or religion at all! Over the last year The Table has grown, mostly from those who are on the sidelines of society or more high-need. However, this means that there is more of a need than ever for strong engagement by the wider community and volunteers. The Table thrives with diverse engagement from all people from all walks of life. The partnerships with Chef Bob from Hilton and Trader Joe’s have helped with the growth tremendously, but there are always challenges to growth, and The Table is in a phase of managing that growth. I’m very excited for The Table to have another marvelous year and very honored to have gotten a chance to spend time and work with such amazing volunteers!

Reformed Church of Highland Park Affordable Housing Corporation
(RCHP-AHC)
A brief 2017-2018 Report

RCHP-AHC is an important way in which RCHP members live out their calling to give preferential option to those who are poor or disenfranchised. RCHP-AHC has grown tremendously over the past decade. In 2008 we completed Irayna Court, which was the only intention for which we’d developed RCHP-AHC. Since that time we’ve purchased 11 buildings and, at the time of this printing, we have 5 more purchases in the works. In addition to the buildings owned by the agency RCHP-AHC manages 15 other properties and gets to choose the tenants for those properties. A large number of the properties are dedicated to refugees and asylum seekers.

The budget, inclusive of Interfaith-RISE, which lives under the agency, is nearly $650,000/year. RCHP-AHC employees thirteen people, pays rent to RCHP for use of office space, and helps us confront one of the most important social justice issues of our time—affordable housing.

RCHP-AHC owns or manages homes in Highland Park, New Brunswick, South River, Iselin, Edison, Plainfield, Bridgewater, Newark, Keyport and Franklin. RCHP members are always encouraged to consider coming on the board of directors. You are invited to come to board meetings if you’d like to learn more about the ways you can assist with this! Meetings are usually the last Tuesday night of every month.

Detention Center Visits
In 2017-2018, Reformed Church of Highland Park continued its commitment to regularly visit immigrant detainees in the Elizabeth Detention Center. Visitation happened twice a week, one day designated to visiting men, other women. Throughout this past year, we have consistently visited 11 men from countries, such as Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mexico, Liberia, Hungary and Indonesia. Our Wednesday Visitation team consistently visited 13 women throughout this past year, many from Uganda, Nigeria, and various other countries.

Volunteers from within the church, local colleges, and broader community were involved in this endeavor. On any given week, there were between 6-12 volunteers attending visitation.
However, if there were visiting groups from colleges or churches, this number would double. Middlesex Community College was a large participant in this program. Their service learning program referred students to local agencies involved in some form of social justice work. RCHP was one of the hosting agencies that were able to supervise students as they completed their hours. Community members who participated in local protests or marches loved this program. Those who visited men often mentioned how visitation was one way to make a difference and directly address the injustice of those detained.

The Wednesday visitation team grew in size over the course of the year. Where there was a lull in volunteers during December-January, the team came to reach upwards of 20-23 members from February-April. The team benefited greatly from working with the students at Middlesex Community College, and these students were core members of our visitation team. Overall, this team was vibrant, intergenerational mix of students, activists, artists, and congregants. We benefited greatly from our partnerships with First Friends and the administration at Middlesex Community College. Many of our volunteers, especially students, would come to fulfill a requirement but stayed because they built meaningful relationships with detainees.

Submitted by Emily Adams and Christopher Palmer

Interfaith-RISE

RCHP got involved in refugee resettlement in late 2015, and by October 1, 2016, we had been approved as an official refugee resettlement site in NJ. This status is not easy to come by, but the strength of our interfaith organizing efforts convinced a Washington-based Placement and Resettlement Site called USCRI to partner with us. From May 1 of last year through May 1 of this year we have resettled 33 refugees and we have resettled 13 asylees. We have resettled refugees/asylees from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Israel and Jamaica.

Interfaith-RISE is led by a tremendous interfaith coalition that meets monthly to review cases for incoming refugees and to review how volunteers can support our staff. For the first two years of the agency we were led by Paola Stevens. Now, as of April 15th, leadership comes from Anna Petri and Jennifer Castro. Pastor Seth is the Executive Director of Interfaith-RISE.

Interfaith-RISE lives under RCHP-AHC and has an operating budget of around $100,000. In addition to the operating budget Interfaith-RISE manages funds from the state department for each refugees (around $1,000 per person) and raising approximately $500 more per person in private donations. In addition to financial help Interfaith-RISE fully populates houses with beds, dressers, tables, chairs, kitchen utensils, rugs, couches…everything and secures rental properties throughout Central New Jersey.

Global Grace Café

Soon after RCHP started resettling refugees in an official capacity we opened Global Grace Cafe. Each day chefs coming into our community from around the world create beautiful dishes that are shared with the Highland Park community. Last year we sold approximately $85,000 worth of lunches at $5/lunch! The cafe almost breaks even, and even when there are months that are a little slower than at other times, it generates such incredible energy in the church that some of our Sunday morning church growth
has to be attributed to the success of the cafe! Emily Randall-Goodwin is a terrific Cafe Manager, and she works with an ever-changing team of chefs and kitchen assistants. We are truly grateful for what God does in and through Global Grace Cafe at RCHP!

**DIRE**

**Deportation & Immigration Response Equipo**

Since the Executive Order of January 25th, 2017 called “The Security of the Interior” that was issued by President Trump RCHP has been managing a program called DIRE. DIRE is made up of church members and activists who are deeply concerned that the immigration policies in this country break up families and create unnecessary chaos in our communities. DIRE carries out the following functions.

1) DIRE manages a hotline that people can call if they have immigration concerns.
2) DIRE accompanies immigrants to ICE check-ins or to other appointments related to benefits after a loved one is deported (Example: Dad is deported and now the kids are eligible for food stamps).
3) DIRE manages a Court Monitoring System to protect immigrants when they go to municipal court in North Brunswick. This program will expand.

Churches Improving Communities

www.ImprovingNJ.org

ChurchesImprovingCommunities@gmail.com

**Report for RCHP Annual Meeting – May 2018**

Churches Improving Communities (CIC) is the community development corporation of Classis New Brunswick that assists churches to begin or expand community service and social justice projects. Pooling resources between churches, programs, and other local non-profits, CIC dramatically increases services available to the community.

**CIC operates four programs:**

**Church-Based Mental Health Services**, which offers free and low-cost professional mental health counseling at seven churches in four central NJ counties;

**CALTR – FIA**, an experiential learning program that brings groups from across the country to help with construction and maintenance projects for affordable housing through a partnership with RCHP-Affordable Housing Corporation, and provides volunteer and learning opportunities through work around topics like asylum and refugee work, homelessness, mental health, and more;

**NeighborCorps Re-Entry Services**, which assists people to successfully re-enter their communities after being released from the Middlesex County Jail; and the **Focus Church Development Program**, which pairs CIC staff with one church for a full year of walking with that church, discerning needs, and developing service programs. The CIC Board of Trustees oversees the organization, with steering committees advising each individual program. CIC also assists Classis churches with grant writing, program development, budgeting, community partnerships, volunteer recruitment, and other topics. Learn more at [www.ImprovingNJ.org](http://www.ImprovingNJ.org).

**Church Based Mental Health Services (CBMHS)**

*Church Based Mental Health Services Provides free and low-cost professional mental health counseling to individuals at 7 churches in Middlesex, Somerset, Monmouth and Ocean Counties. CBMHS serves members of the community who have difficulty obtaining non-crisis mental health services as a direct result of the stigma of mental illness, the cost of mental health services (with or without insurance) or the complexity of our mental health care referral system.*
Church Based Mental Health Services provides over 40 hours of direct clinical care each month at 7 churches in 4 central New Jersey Counties. These individuals receive a thorough assessment of needs and resources, vetted referrals, and when appropriate, short-term counseling. Problems addressed include depression, anxiety, chronic pain, marital or family relationship problems, substance use problems, grief and stress due unemployment. Services include weekly or biweekly, individual or couple’s sessions as well as monthly caregiver support groups. These services are also made possible by independently licensed professionals within our congregations and communities who volunteer their services to the program and make provisions within their own practices to assist with clients needing longer-term care. In addition to individual and group support, CBMHS clinicians and volunteers have offered educational programming on teen dating violence, bullying, stigma and general mental health awareness at each location.

The following churches participate in CBMHS: First Reformed Church of South River and the Reformed Church of Highland Park in Middlesex County; Colts Neck Reformed Church, the Community Church of Keyport and The Church in Brielle in Monmouth County; Middlebush Reformed Church in Somerset County, and Ocean Community Church in Manahawkin, NJ. Lorrie McGough, LPC, LCADC, NCC is our southern NJ Mental Health Counselor, providing services at the churches in Ocean and Brielle. April Humes is Clinical Director of the program, and provides services at Middlebush, Keyport, South River, and RCHP. Dr. Carol Turner is the CMBHS Consulting Psychologist and also sees clients.

Some program highlights include:

- CBMHS participated in a community forum addressing teen suicide held with representatives from schools and churches across Middlesex and Somerset Counties.
- In May, CBMHS and the Middlebush Reformed Church offered a wellness event on Prayer and Meditation.
- In June, CBMHS partnered with 7SeedsYoga to offer a training and wellness event on Trauma, Addiction, and Recovery for community mental health volunteers and ministry leaders.
- RCHP Supervision Group meets every other week Chronic Pain and Chronic Illness support group is meeting weekly.
- CBMHS continues to provide support to NeighborCorps Re-entry Services, Interfaith Rise and the Affordable Housing Cooperation through clinical consultation, house meetings, a bi-weekly supervision group for leaders, which started in January 2018.

Focus Church Development Program

The Focus Church Development Program (FCDP) is a joint program of CIC and Classis New Brunswick that pairs CIC staff and volunteers with one church for a full
year of discernment and program development. CIC walks with the church to explore the strengths, needs, and dreams of the congregation and larger community, and assists in the creation of programs that address these dreams.

In 2017/18, FCDP has worked with Trinity Reformed Church of North Plainfield. A committee with members from CIC and First Reformed met monthly to set the agenda for the work and to discuss progress. This year’s work has focused on Trinity’s connection to the community through church plant, Agape House.

Applications for the 2018/19 FCDP program are available now at ImprovingNJ.org.

**CALTR – Faith in Action**

*CALTR-Faith in Action connects volunteer groups with meaningful service opportunities that support low-income New Jersey residents and explore the connection between faith and service through the lens of affordable housing, homelessness, refugee and asylee work, mental health, and more.*

In 2017, CALTR began the transition from Superstorm Sandy recovery work at the Jersey shore to CALTR-FIA – an organization that is now in partnership with RCHP-AHC to provide maintenance, rehabilitation and repairs to existing and newly acquired AHC properties for low-income residents, as well as engaging in Faith in Action immersion experiences for visiting work groups. 2017 saw the following accomplishments:

- 110 week-long volunteers from 9 groups across the U.S.
- 25 local unemployed volunteers mentored in job skills
- 3,630 estimated total volunteer hours
- $83,900: Approx. Total saved by homeowners on labor and materials

CALTR –FIA wishes to thank The Foundation to Save the Jersey Shore, Colts Neck Reformed Church and the Community Outreach Group of Middletown, NJ for their continued financial support. We also wish to thank the many hospitality volunteers who give so generously of their time and hearts, in particular, Frank Gibriano, Arthur Jemmy and Yohanes Tasik, our kitchen managers. Many thanks to Global Grace Café for providing our groups with awesome international cuisine.

Looking forward, 2018 will see week-long volunteers spending more time learning about our various social justice and community-minded ministries. Already in 2018, we’ve had a high school student who was here in March ask if he could come back to do a summer internship at RCHP – truly a blessing!

**NeighborCorps Re-Entry Services**

*NeighborCorps Re-Entry Services provides free, supportive services that help individuals to transition from Middlesex County Jail back into society and avoid recidivism. Learn more at www.NeighborCorpsReEntry.org.*

This year, NeighborCorps had a significant staffing change, saying goodbye to director Justina Otero who moved on to other career opportunities, and hello to Program Director, Austin Morreale, Administrative Director, Tracy Cangiano, and Re-Entry Coordinator, Valerie Jones. We are so blessed by their talents and dedication!
NeighborCorps currently averages 50 participants, both in and outside of the jail, and is in touch with every individual who is serving a sentence in Middlesex County Jail. With the help of staff and volunteers, Participants receive reliable, unconditional support and empowerment beginning inside the jail and continuing throughout their re-entry process. Along with connection to social services and other agencies as needed, they have also been able to obtain emergency housing preventing homelessness, gain substantial employment, utilize Church Based Mental Health Services enroll in drug and alcohol treatment programs, receive accompaniment to court, probation and parole appointments, and any additional assistance when needed.

In addition to the one-on-one relationships that are at the heart of NeighborCorps mission, we continue to strengthen community partnerships including networking within the social justice/ criminal justice community and strengthening relationships with a variety of organizations, including CoLab Arts, the NJ Institute for Social Justice, the NJ Spark program (a social justice journalism lab at Rutgers), Ethnos Church New Brunswick, and the Drug Policy Alliance. We have also implemented new initiatives such as a trauma-based yoga program for incarcerated individuals at Middlesex County Adult Correctional Center, and a backpack drive to collect backpacks, toiletries, and socks for recently released returning citizens.

**CIC BOARD**
Clark Petrie, President
Anthony Di Grigoli, Vice-President
Dr. Carol Turner, Secretary
Craig Jensen, Treasurer
Rev. Seth Kaper-Dale
Jean Stockdale
Carol Anderson
Kristy Lauricella
Sunny Gandem
Altea Shepler
Rev. Colleen Toole

**Advisers to the Board**
Rev. Dr. Ursula Cargill
Rev. Douglas Shepler
Brian Szura

**CIC STAFF**
*Austin Morreale*
NeighborCorps Program Director

*Tracy Cangiano*
NeighborCorps Administrative Director

*Valerie Jones*
NeighborCorps Re-Entry Coordinator

*Deborah Convery*
CALTR Volunteer and Hospitality Coordinator

*April Humes, MA, LPC*
CBMHS Clinical Director

*Lorrie McGough, LPC, LCADC, NCC*
CBMHS Mental Health Counselor
Who Is My Neighbor? Inc. (WIMNI) is a 501c3 affiliated nonprofit of RCHP with a mission to provide enriching social and educational programs for children, families, and adults in order to create connections and to foster a sense of belonging in our diverse community. In gratitude for the leadership of WIMNI’s board members and the support of our local community, we are thankful for the opportunity to serve through the multiple programs and events listed in this 2017 annual report.

• **The Family Den** celebrated its sixth anniversary. This energetic early childhood enrichment and parenting support program is meeting many needs within our community among families with young children, averaging 20-30 families per day, with over 18 nationalities represented within the participants. The Family Den partners with Interfaith-RISE to offer a welcoming place for newly arrived refugee families with young children. We are thankful for the social workers who lead this program.

• **The Senior Social Network** celebrated its fourth anniversary and boasts an active 25 participating adults (ages 60 and older). In addition to concerts, museum outings, and luncheons, this group gathers monthly for meetings to discuss topics of interest and to create opportunities for socialization.

• **The Cave Afterschool Drop-In Center** is a partnership program of Who Is My Neighbor and RCHP and provides a positive afterschool experience for over 60 middle school students this year. Enrichment opportunities in The Cave included a cooking class and multiple creative arts programs.

• **Camp Cool Environment** offered eight weeks of summer fun with up to 30 elementary-aged campers and six teenage volunteer counselors in attendance per week. This program offers environmental, science, and arts fun and learning through hands-on activities, field trips, and games. Over one-third of the campers attended on financial scholarships generously given from individuals in our community. We are thankful for our outstanding camp staff.

• WIMNI continues to be the collection organization for **Terracycle** in Highland Park, recycling hard-to-recycle materials that would otherwise be thrown away. We are thankful for the partnership with the RCHP Kids in the Cave youth group which weekly sorts the materials.

• WIMNI continues to serve as fiscal agent for Highland Park Buddy Ball sports program for children with disabilities. WIMNI also serves fiscal agent for the Highland Park African-American History Project, which celebrated the premiere of the student documentary film **Blacked Out**.

• WIMNI ran a children’s leadership camp and a children’s musical theater camp featuring the original work of Amos Caley **The Toolbox Tale**.
• WIMNI brought two performances to Highland Park: *The Laramie Project* in partnership with coLAB Arts and *Percussion Rhythms of the Caribbean* concert featuring Black Circle Symphony and Raices Cultural Center.

**Finance Committee Report**

*Reporting on January-December 2017*

Members: Jim Collins, Selma Colmant, Colin Jager, Seth Kaper-Dale, Charlie Page, Carol Turner, Sharon Teahl, Jim Zarra

As a church we are truly blessed by the generosity of members and friends, both past and present. Some of the projects this past year which were funded in part by special gifts created as memorials by church members and their families, and our investment accounts -- Main, Hartz, and Sanctuary Accounts -- included supporting our student ministers, providing special music during worship, replace parsonage chimney, supporting vacation bible school, and financing the summer Mission Project. We are very fortunate that despite having to sell $87,316 worth of stock to meet expenses, the value of our investments decreased only 4.7% over the year ($623,478 -- Dec 2017) vs. ($654,390 -- Dec 2016).

Regular Income did not change significantly ($327,909 -- 2017) vs. ($329,470 -- 2016) thanks to increased congregational giving ($227,262 --2017) vs. ($218,132 -- 2016), steady rent for use of church facilities ($63,862 -- 2017) vs. (65,121 -- 2016)) and higher earnings from the Tower Thrift Shop ($27,796 -- 2017) vs. ($21,626 -- 2016).

Fortunately our Total Expenses were slightly less in 2017 ($472,568) than 2016 ($478,655). Lower costs of staff, disaster relief, benevolence, and miscellaneous expenses were balanced out by increased costs for insurance, repair and upkeep, and utilities.

Our 2018 budget is $10,431 higher than in 2017 ($385,660 -- 2017). It will take generous giving, and excellent performance by our investments, if we are to meet our operating budget.

The many valuable ministries of the Church continue to depend upon the generosity of its members and friends. We wish to thank you for all of the ways that you contribute financially to the church.

The Peace of Christ to you,
Charles Page - Finance Committee

**Statistical Report January 1, 2017– December 31, 2017**

**Reformed Church of Highland Park**

**Rolls as of December 31, 2017**

- Active Members: 267
- Inactive Members: 73
- Children of Members and Adherents: 149
- Adherents Adults: 105

Total: 594

**Members Received: 20**

- Ellen Monroe
- Cori Anderson
- Emmanuel Kalinda
- Yvonne Kalinda
- Catherine Adeniji
- Nadiah Tucker
- Hailen Arp
Marwin Aslah
Christia Assa
Abby Carman
Amos Chapman
Penelope de La Cruz
Josie Estes
Ava MacKinnon
Bella Sanchez
Alex Dawson
Christy Lauricella
Thad Winkle
Daniel Benkendorf

Deaths:  9
Bob Hawkins
Jim McMahon
Donald Tierney
Duane Rumbaugh
Gene Molnar
John Faust
Michael Faust
Natasha Benkendorf

Michael Parlatore
Olga Rankin

Baptisms:  14
Jackson Parlatore
Julius Adonis Sierra
Willem Day Van Elswyk
Clara Benkendorf
Julia Benkendorf
Ava MacKinnon
Seamus MacKinnon
Amos Chapman
Isaac Ehioghae
Nadiah Tucker
Isabella Sanchez
Leela Sarah Puthumana
Shannon McGrath
Cori Anderson

Marriages:  1
Austin Morreale and Jennifer Sanchez