



middle notes

The Newsletter of Middle Collegiate Church

MAY 2015

[Watch live on middlechurch.org](http://middlechurch.org)

**Celebration! Worship
at 11:15 AM**

**MAY 3
VISION SUNDAY**

"What the World Needs
Now Is Love"

Jacqui Lewis, preacher
Middle Church Choir
MCJJ Gospel Choir
Communion

MAY 10

"The Guild of Mysterious
Materials"

Adriene Thorne, preacher
Middle Church Choir

MAY 17

"Witness!"

Jacqui Lewis, preacher
MCJJ Gospel Choir

MAY 24

PENTECOST

"You Can't Handle the Truth"
Adriene Thorne, preacher
Middle Church Choir

MAY 31

"The Boy Who Cried 'Abba'"

Alisa Joyce, preacher
Middle Church Choir

**Art & Soul Worship
at 6:00 PM**

MAY 3

VISION SUNDAY

"What the World Needs
Now Is Love"

Jacqui Lewis, preacher
Middle Community Chorus
Communion

MAY 10

"BFFs"

Alisa Joyce, preacher
Middle Community Chorus

MAY 17

"In the Weeds"

Jim Kast-Keat, preacher
Middle Community Chorus

MAY 24

PENTECOST

"Sermon Slam"

Jim Kast-Keat, preacher
Middle Community Chorus

MAY 31

"Do You Think God Loves
Everybody and Everybody's
Going to Heaven?!"

Adriene Thorne, preacher
Middle Community Chorus

Love: Be Our Vision



I am writing this on the Monday after our ninth Leading Edge Conference: Race, Courage and Commitment—Creating the World We Want. My mind is full of the presentations, conversations, and learnings I gleaned over the weekend. Though I had work to do, the weekend gave me such a sense of purpose and direction. Here were other souls who traveled to Middle Church to find partners for the journey, and to authorize the destination—an anti-racist world full of incredible diversity of people. A world in which we are all loved for our unique particularity and our lovely peculiarities. How rich to be on a path toward the Reign of God with so many who find hope in that phrase, who affirm racial reconciliation and God's plan for God's people.

I found myself recalling the vision for The Middle Project and the conference, hatched out at lunch on butcher block paper while I was on vacation with my husband, John. I reminisced about how supportive the consistory was then and now for a "teaching church" that would help the progressive movement for justice by training leaders. How we all—staff and board—envisioned Middle Church and The Middle Project as partners in creating a more just society. Wow! We dreamed a dream and it has come true. The Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes said about Middle, "Ever see a dream walking; a dream talking? This is it!"

Why has this dream come true? I believe because it was a dream lodged in the dream of God. I am so moved every time I read this meditation from The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman in his book *Meditations of the Heart*.

Be Thou my vision.

There are periods when all the margins of my awareness fade and I seem to be a wanderer lost in an unfamiliar land. Hard it is to focus, to make direction with my thoughts my plans my dreams. There are times when all clouds life and before me looms in brightest radiance, the goal so

long thought. As I watch it and move more and more in the path which it describes before me, something happens. I do not know how—but the goal seems tawdry, less worthy than that which first sent me on my way. Now I seem more than lost—seem deserted, betrayed, not by the evil machinations of my mind, not by the willfulness of my own stubborn heart and mind—I seem betrayed by the vision, the goal itself. Be Thou my vision that I may have always before me, and with me, the test, the checking point, of all my dreams; however whole, however glorious, however true they may seem to be.

Be Thou my vision this day.

I seek Thy vision not for tomorrow, not for some future day when I am more worthy and more prepared to know and understand. I seek Thy vision *this day*. Grant to me the flooding of my whole self with the light of Thy countenance that I may know directly when I have missed the way—when I have drifted out of the channel of Thy Purpose.

As we continue to seek our purpose in God's purpose, Middle Family, as we seek to find our dream in God's dream, know this one thing: God is love. God is LOVE. We are called to find our purpose in radical, unbelievable LOVE. For our God, our neighbors, and ourselves. Love means Black Lives Matter. Love means gay marriage is sacred. Love means every life is precious. Love means solidarity with those on the margins, especially when they are desperate. Love means using non-violent protest to create the world we want. May Love be our guide as we look to Vision 2020 and all the stunning things God will do through us.

I love you,
Jacqui

Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis is Senior Minister at Middle Collegiate Church.

Middle Church Vision Sunday — May 3 immediately following worship

Middle Responds to East Village Explosion

BY CHRISTINA FLEMING

When the gas explosion happened on the northwest corner of Second Avenue and East 7th Street on Thursday, March 26 around 3:15 PM, the Middle Church staff and building were safe. Three buildings across the street from us burned and collapsed through the evening and night. Our staff was asked by the police department to evacuate soon after the explosion.

An hour later the police asked us to open the building for first responders, but when staff returned to the building, they were asked to leave again because the area was not safe. A few hours later, staff were able to open our building for the first responders with the help of Rev. Ann Kansfield. The FDNY, NYPD, Con Ed, and others used the social hall and the community room as headquarters for meeting spaces, restrooms, copier services, and coffee from Thursday, March 26 through Tuesday, March 31.

Rev. Ann Kansfield is a Middle Church member who was onsite during the March 26 fire. Middle Church supported her ordination as a Reformed minister when the denomination was not affirming of ordaining LGBT candidates for ministry. She was ordained in the United Church of Christ and serves Greenpoint Reformed Church in Brooklyn. *The New York Times* profiled Ann when the New York Fire Department recently swore her in as the first openly lesbian FDNY Chaplain. Ann was a chaplain onsite during the fire, and she posted this to her Facebook page about Middle Church's response to the disaster:

"I'd really like to thank my friends at Middle Collegiate Church. After a few hours of responding to the explosion on Second Ave., well . . . nature really starts to call. Most nearby businesses had closed, so finding a bathroom was not so easy. I called Jacqui Lewis and she very graciously offered the church. Ellen Matlach walked over and gave me the key, showed me around and got coffee supplies. Within a minute folks started coming to use the facilities. When I left around 9:30 PM, at least 30-40 folks were having a meeting in the social hall to coordinate the long-term response and Jacqui was ordering a ton of pizza for everyone (because after you finally get to pee, you suddenly realize you're hungry). Thank you Middle Church!"



Ann Kansfield

On Palm Sunday morning, three days after the blast, Middle Church welcomed the first responders to our morning worship celebration, gave them a standing ovation, and offered them a blessing. Our gratitude and our blessing for the first responders was shared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Today Show*, NY1, NBC4, ABC7, and CBS2.



Angie Dykshorn

And since the fire, the Middle Church family and The Collegiate Churches of New York have donated more than \$10,000 toward the Mayor's Fund (\$7,500), and the Go Fund Me Site of Mildred Guy's family (\$2,700) who have lived in the neighborhood for more than four decades. Gift cards were also donated by members and distributed.

Cub Scout Pack 76, young boys from the north shore of Staten Island, raised \$179 for the victims of the fire by baking bread and selling it at the coffee hour of Christ Church New Brighton. They sent a check with their handwritten cards made from folded construction paper to Middle Church, which we gave to the Mayor's Fund.

Our neighbors La Palapa Restaurant and Grace Church High School collected clothing for displaced residents, and Middle Church distributed the clothing in early April.

Middle Church also hung a banner with the words "East Village Strong" on our church fence to celebrate the resilience of our community. Local residents and congregants have added their prayers and comments to it, so it is inscribed with your thoughts of love and care.

On April 14, City Council Member Rosie Mendez, State Senator Brad Hoylman, Manhattan Community Board 3 District Manager Susan Stetzer, and about a dozen city officials were at Middle Church to offer local businesses economic recovery assistance as they navigate insurance, loans, and the city municipalities in order to reopen and relocate after the blast. Our third floor studio was standing room only as more than 110 people attended. NY1, ABC7, and Fox News also covered the economic recovery efforts. Please join us in supporting the businesses near the blast in the coming weeks and months.

Second Avenue Street Fair

Saturday, May 9, 2015 • 10:00 AM–4:00 PM

Come support the neighborhood and join us for an exciting day of music, activities and delights! Interested in volunteering with Middle Church or in renting a table? Contact Rachel at rhippert@middlechurch.org for info and registration.

Food Justice: Butterfly and Food Pantry

Butterfly began again on Easter Sunday, feeding our hungry neighbors in the local parks every Sunday following the morning worship celebration. Our Food Pantry client base continues to grow every second and fourth Sunday. We always need new volunteers, so contact Alisa (ajoyce@middlechurch.org) for more information or if you are interested in helping or getting help.

Vigil for the Nigerian School Girls

Seventeen-year-old Middle teenager, Sierra Williams, and our director of outreach and communications, Christina Fleming, were a part of a diversity of speakers at the #BringBackOurGirls Interfaith Prayer Vigil at the United Nations Church Center marking the one-year anniversary of the kidnapping of the Chibok girls. The chapel was standing room only as Nigerian women and Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faith leaders urged those gathered to keep praying and writing for their release. Everyone in attendance wore a number to represent a kidnapped girl. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish teenage girls sat on the stage during the vigil to remind us of the girls kidnapped and enslaved. Our own Sierra Williams represented the 73rd Nigerian girl.

Almost a dozen Middle congregants and additional members of The Collegiate Churches of New York came to pray, organize, and call for their return. After the vigil, participants marched to the Nigerian Embassy. Participants and churches are asked to write the U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria to continue to pressure government officials for their return. His address is: Ambassador James F. Entwistle, Embassy of the United States of America; Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive; Central District Area; Abuja; Nigeria.

The Leading Edge 2015

Over the April 24–26 weekend, Middle Church hosted more than 180 participants from around the country at The Middle Project's ninth annual conference, "Race, Reconciliation and Courage: Creating the World We Want." Clergy and lay leaders gained tools for healing in their congregations and communities through powerful speeches, group discussions, and artistic worship celebrations. Rev. Dr. James Forbes, Rev. Dr. Miguel De La Torre, young activists in the #BlackLivesMatter movement, Charles Randolph-Wright and other Middle artists, and nationally recognized clergy were among the presenters.

Middle Church on *The Today Show*

NBC's *The Today Show* featured Middle Church and Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis on Tuesday, March 31 as a part of a Holy Week Series. Middle Church was a part of a story answering, "Who Is God Today?" And they shared a second story about Middle Church on Today.com on Monday, April 6. If you have not seen the segments, visit <http://on.today.com/1DN6K5H>.

May

Check middlechurch.org for full details of all events.

Sunday Mornings

- **Wee Care** (under age 4) – 9:30 AM–2:30 PM • *3rd Floor Wee Care*
- **MAY 10 – New Member Orientation Part 1** – 10:00–11:00 AM
- **MAY 17 – Praying Dangerously** – 10:00–11:00 AM
- **CELEBRATION! SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP** – 11:15 AM–12:30 PM
 - MAY 3 – Vision Sunday** – "What the World Needs Now Is Love" Jacqui Lewis, preacher • Middle Church Choir • MCJJ Gospel Choir • Communion
 - MAY 10** – "The Guild of Mysterious Materials" • Adriene Thorne, preacher • Middle Church Choir • New Members Welcomed
 - MAY 17** – "Witness!" • Jacqui Lewis, preacher • MCJJ Gospel Choir
 - MAY 24 – Pentecost** – "You Can't Handle the Truth" Adriene Thorne, preacher • Middle Church Choir
 - MAY 31** – "The Boy Who Cried 'Abba'" • Alisa Joyce, preacher • Middle Church Choir

Sunday Afternoons

- **The Ark** (Grades K–6) – 11:30–12:30 PM • *3rd Floor Studio*
- **Chat & Chew** – 12:30 PM • *Social Hall*
- **Adult Ed: Reading the Bible from the Middle** – 1:15–2:30 PM
- **Village Chorus for Children and Youth** – 1:00–2:30 PM
- **Middle Community Chorus Rehearsal** – 4:30–5:30 PM • *Sanctuary*
- **MAY 3 – Congregational Vision Meeting** – 12:30 PM
- **MAY 3 – Middle Consistory Meeting** – 2:30 PM • *Conference Room*
- **MAY 10, 24 – Food Pantry Distribution** – 1:30–3:00 PM
- **MAY 10 – New Member Orientation Part 1** – 5:00–5:45 PM
- **MAY 17 – MP Young Adult Leadership Training** – 1:00–5:00 PM
- **MAY 17 – Third Sunday Being Groups** – 1:15–2:30 PM

Sunday Evenings

- **ART & SOUL SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP** – 6:00–7:00 PM
 - MAY 3 – Vision Sunday** – "What the World Needs Now Is Love" Jacqui Lewis, preacher • Middle Community Chorus • Communion
 - MAY 10** – "BFFs" Alisa Joyce, preacher • Middle Community Chorus • New Members Welcomed
 - MAY 17** – "In the Weeds" Jim Kast-Keat, preacher • Middle Community Chorus
 - MAY 24 – Pentecost** – "Sermon Slam" • Jim Kast-Keat, preacher • Middle Community Chorus
 - MAY 31** – "Do You Think God Loves Everybody and Everybody's Going to Heaven?!" Adriene Thorne, preacher • Middle Community Chorus
- **Chat & Chew** – 7:00–7:30 PM • *Social Hall*
- **MAY 10, 24 – Encore** – 7:15–7:45 PM • *Social Hall*
- **Alcoholics Anonymous** – 7:00–8:00 PM • *3rd Floor Studio*

Weekdays This Month

Tuesdays

- **Alcoholics Anonymous** – 7:00–8:00 PM / 8:30–9:30 PM
- **Writing Workshop with Chuck Wachtel** – 7:00–9:00 PM
- **Al-Anon** – 7:30–8:45 PM
- **MAY 19 – Pub Theology** – 7:00–8:30 PM • *Jimmy's No. 43, 43 E. 7th St.*

Thursdays

- **Creative Writing** – 6:30–8:00 PM • *4th Floor Studio*
- **MCJJ Gospel Choir Rehearsal** – 7:00 PM • *Community Room*
- **Al-Anon** – 7:30–8:30 PM
- **MAY 28 – Upper Room Devotional Study** – 6:30–8:00 PM

Saturdays

- **Alcoholics Anonymous** – 7:00–8:00 PM / 7:00–9:30 PM
- **MAY 9 – Second Avenue Street Fair** – 10:00 PM–4:00 PM



The Middle Church Jerries Johnson Gospel Choir sang and The Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis spoke at the **Unite4Marriage** rally in Times Square on April 27, on the eve of the U.S. Supreme Court hearing *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a case that examines if same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry.



April 15, 2015 was a National day of action for **#fightfor15**, a movement for the rights of minimum wage workers and demanding a wage increase to \$15 per hour plus a union. Middle Church clergy and congregants participated in the rally and march in Columbus Circle.



On Palm Sunday, Middle member Anne Binkley challenged the Middle family to match her Eastertide offering of \$20,000. To date, you have donated \$19,860 to match Anne's generous gift. **There's still time to match Anne!**

50 East 7th Street • New York, NY 10003
Middle Collegiate Church



Middle Collegiate Church

welcoming • artistic • inclusive • bold

Rev. Jacqueline J. Lewis, Ph.D., *Senior Minister*

SANCTUARY 112 Second Avenue (bet. 6th St. & 7th St.)
OFFICE 50 East 7th Street (bet. First Ave. & Second Ave.)
New York, NY 10003

TELEPHONE 212-477-0666

CARE LINE 917-439-9268

WEBSITE middlechurch.org

EMAIL middleinfo@middlechurch.org

FOLLOW US! facebook.com/MiddleCollegiateChurch
facebook.com/RevJacquiLewis
vimeo.com/middlechurch
twitter.com/middlechurch
twitter.com/RevJacquiLewis

Middle Collegiate Church is a celebrating, culturally diverse, inclusive, and growing community of faith where all persons are welcomed just as they are as they come through the door. Rooted in Christian tradition as the oldest continuous Protestant Church in North America, Middle Church is called by God to boldly do a new thing on the earth.

As a teaching congregation that celebrates the arts, our ministries include rich and meaningful worship, care, and education that nurture the mind, body, and spirit, social action which embraces the global community, and participation in interfaith dialogue for the purpose of justice and reconciliation.

Care Line For pastoral care emergencies, call the Care Line at **917-439-9268** to leave your urgent message in the Pastoral Care Mailbox. A Middle Church pastor will return your call as soon as she or he is able. Only Middle pastors have access to the Pastoral Care Mailbox. All messages are treated confidentially.