



# middle notes

The Newsletter of Middle Collegiate Church

MAY 2013

Visit [middlechurch.org](http://middlechurch.org)  
for live worship webcasts

[Sunday Morning  
Worship at 11:15 AM](#)

**MAY 5**

"For the Healing  
of the Nations"  
Jacqui Lewis, preacher  
Middle Church Choir  
MCJJ Gospel Choir  
Eternal Spirit Dance  
Communion

*Congregational Meeting  
following worship!*

**MAY 12**

**FAMILY WORSHIP**  
"Prison Break"  
Adriene Thorne, preacher  
Middle Church Choir  
New Members Welcomed

**MAY 19**

**PENTECOST**  
"A Multitude of Voices"  
Jacqui Lewis and  
Robert Chase, preachers  
Middle Church Choir  
MCJJ Gospel Choir

**MAY 26**

"Speak the Truth"  
Tricia Sheffield, preacher  
Middle Church Choir

[Sunday Evening  
Worship at 6:00 PM](#)

**MAY 5**

"City of Light"  
Tricia Sheffield, preacher  
Bernice Brooks and  
friends, art

**MAY 12**

**YOUTH NIGHT**  
"Subway Stories"  
Alisa Joyce and Middle  
Youth, worship leaders  
Dionne McClain-Freeneey  
and IllumniNation, art

**MAY 19**

"Children of God"  
Jacqui Lewis, preacher  
Tituss Burgess and  
Jeremy Bertrand-Price, art

**MAY 26**

"Girl God II"  
Adriene Thorne, preacher  
Team Nippon, art

## Over the Rainbow

Are you like me? Do you live a lot of your life in the future? My preaching dates are set through June 2014, and I am working on scheduling the other clergy. I am negotiating with Otis Moss III, Senior Minister of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, for him to preach at our 2014 conference. I am thinking about how to make *Jesus Christ Superstar* happen next Lent. I am working with the consistory and Collegiate staff on how to maximize our worship space when we return to the church house after the renovations are completed at the end of this year.

I spend a lot of my life in the future. Can I manage to be in Chicago for my nephew RJ's 5th birthday in October? Can I learn to be a stronger swimmer before vacation this summer and that wedding in Minnesota? What will we do for Dad's 80th birthday in November 2014?

When I was a little girl in fourth grade, I starred as Dorothy in our grammar school production of *The Wizard of Oz*. I have to admit that I am always thinking about how to bring "over the rainbow" here and now. I am always leaning forward into the future, with the hope that tomorrow can be better; that looking ahead gives us a chance to get ready for whatever comes, better or worse; and that each of us has power to cooperate with God to make the future look like peace, like Shalom.

My optimism for the future is fueled not only by my past, but by my ministry at Middle Church. This place makes me want to sing songs about rainbows and vision and purpose and hope. Working at Middle Church exceeds my expectations for vocation. At a church camp when I was 14 years old and feeling a confirmed call to ministry, there was nothing that could have prepared me for the abundant grace and joy that I feel as your pastor. You simultaneously blow my mind with your generosity and potential, and break my heart wide open with your love and compassion. You dream the most ambitious dreams for a healed world. I am honored to be your midwife, coaching out of you the miracles—big and small—that

will bring God's Shalom and Reign on earth. The staff stuns me with their gifts and commitment to the work we do, their commitment to you. That people travel to New York to learn from us humbles me. That the backdrop for our mission is New York City and the world is an echo of a vision I had when I was a little person, in which a giant white lion was trying to tell me words that would heal the world.

I love thinking about the future. I join you in dreaming dreams, my wonderful Middle family, of the healed world God is creating for us and with us. I join you in imagining safe space for vulnerable men, women, children, and older people. I imagine, with you, a world in which our earth is beloved, our oceans sparkle with life, our young people have what they need to be full-fledged citizens and everyone has enough. I dream with you that "over the rainbow" comes to fruit here on earth; that "troubles melt like lemon drops away above the chimney tops."

May 5 is Vision Sunday. I am inviting you to come to worship and stay for the vision meeting afterward. Let's try to see into the future together. What is God calling us to do and be, in these next two years, as we fulfill Vision 2015? What gifts do each of us bring to the table to help us to do those things? And, what does God require of us in terms of ethical behavior as we do justice, love mercy and walk closely with our Divine Parent?

Helen Keller once said, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision." We who once were lost and who now are found, have both sight and vision, thanks to the saving power of God. Together, we can see the vision God has for our world, and for us. Come on May 5; let's talk about our future.

I love you!  
Jacqui



Jacqui Lewis is Senior Minister at Middle Collegiate Church.

# Re-Collecting Vision

At Middle Collegiate Church, we share a vision for our ministry together that leads the way in all we do. Our Vision Statement reminds us every day of our call to worship, teach, care, and act.

Below, consistory chairs and vision bearers share their thoughts about Middle Church Vision through the years.

Tom Smucker, Chair 2006–08

The first time I was Consistory Chair in the 1990s, Middle Church didn't have a conscious vision as much as a hope—that we wouldn't be driven out of existence by economics or intolerance. That we would be given the space to succeed, or at least survive.

When I came onto Consistory the second time, Rev. Gordon Dragt announced that he was planning to retire and we would have to start planning to hire his replacement. We had indeed survived and thrived but what were we? What did we hope to continue under new leadership? And so the discussion of “the essential Middle” and then the hiring of Rev. Jacqui Lewis.

Early under Jacqui's leadership we developed the vision statement that is still printed in the bulletin. We began a process of turning our vision into an annual plan. Today, vision bearers continue to hold us accountable to God's call for Middle Church. But before we could look to the future the way we do now, we first had to look around as a congregation and say, “Hey, we're still here” and then ask ourselves, “OK then, who are we?” and come up with the answer.

Danita Branam, Chair 2002–05, Vision Bearer 2006–08

With the installation of Rev. Jacqueline Lewis in 2005 as our Senior Minister came Vision Plan 2010. Rev. Gordon Dragt had talked about Middle Church needing to go deeper and wider after his retirement. What did that mean? What would it look like? It meant setting goals that could not be “achieved” with one sermon or one event or one ask. The goals had to have depth and breadth. We needed to Dream Big!!

We identified our hopes for Middle Church internally as a congregation and externally as an outreach. We identified resources needed to realize these hopes: staff to deliver care and programming; training for ministers, staff, and lay persons in leadership; support for performance arts as a viable vehicle for spiritual development; educational partners to become a teaching institute; accessible, usable, and increased space; and stewardship development. Then we stepped out for social justice—expanding our intention for multicultural diversity and support for racial, economic, and sexual justice. Thoughts moved into action as the feeding, clothing, and disaster recovery ministries expanded. We now have capacity to feed the homeless, provide reasonably priced groceries, and supplement shopping carts with our food pantry; sustain a variety of small groups—spiritual, educational, and artistic; and advocate through rallies, marches, and letter writing.

The Vision Statement still makes my voice quiver and heart beat faster—evidences of the pride it invokes. Only one word has been changed since 2005 “. . . you are welcome just as you are as you *come* [walk] through the door.”

Cheryl Cochran, Vision Bearer, 2008–10, Chair 2011–13

One important aspect of the vision process was that the congregation's input was as important as that of the Consistory and the clergy. The congregation was invited to participate through surveys, congregational meetings, and focus groups throughout the process. It was vital that the diversity of Middle Church was reflected in the process. Congregants were asked to evaluate our ministry. They were asked about their passion/area of interest and they were asked to dream.

As the Consistory and clergy processed the data, we reported regularly to the congregation and garnered their feedback. It was a lot of work and extremely rewarding. Working through all the data revealed the multi-layered panorama that was and is Middle Church. I was continually surprised, challenged, and blessed. I learned that threaded through our diversity are themes of God's radical love, justice, and the arts. Being the Vision Bearer allowed me to see that in the midst of our great diversity, we share a common vision.

Jeff Mummert, Vision Bearer 2011–2013

During my tenure as Vision Bearer, Middle's Vision Plan 2015 has been especially critical in two areas. The first is around “Increasing Connections.” Last year, we moved out of our Social Hall, Program Space, and Offices at 50 East 7th Street to commence on our construction project to make our facilities truly accessible to all. We lost most of our gathering space that was used to connect with one another. However, our conscious and planned efforts in Vision 2015 to invite and train more members to volunteer in support of our programs provided wonderful new ways for people to connect with one another that have taken them outside our walls and into the world together doing God's work. (Hurricane Sandy Relief is one great example.) As a testament to this effort, on Sunday, April 21, we celebrated the gifts of more than 235 volunteers who have served over the past year!

The second area of Vision 2015 that I feel was so important over the past year is “Congregational Ownership and Partnership.” When I joined Middle Church a few years ago, we had just over 400 members. Today we have more than double that number (810!) and that number is growing fast. As we grow in numbers, I believe it is just as (or more) important to grow in Discipleship and Stewardship, and become more self-sufficient as a congregation. I am so proud of our progress in funding more of our local ministry through the tithes and gifts of the members and friends of Middle Church. This will help us to sustain our ministry moving forward and allow us to invest in our ministry and programs that address the needs of our congregation, our community, and our world.

## New Member Gatherings

**Sundays, May 5 and 12 • 9:30–11:00 AM • 122 2nd Ave.**

If you say Middle Church is your church, then make it official! Join us at a series of two New Member Gatherings. We'll share some spiritual journeys, some church history and theology, and some reflection on the gifts you have for doing God's work in this place. New members will join the church during the 11:15 worship celebration on Sunday, May 12. For more information contact [middleinfo@middlechurch.org](mailto:middleinfo@middlechurch.org) or call 212-477-0666.

## Middle Literary Magazine on Sale Now!

The second issue of *Sunday: A Magazine of the Arts at Middle Collegiate Church* is now available! Themes of Peace, Justice and Liberation grace the art and words found therein. Copies are available from editor Carol Wierzbicki and at the church office (\$5), or by download from <http://www.middlechurch.org/about/news/sunday-a-magazine-of-the-arts-at-middle-collegiate-church>. All proceeds go to benefit our programs, so get your copy today!

## Adult Education in May

**Sundays • 1:00 PM • 122 2nd Ave.**

Please join us as we complete our study of *The Gospel of Thomas*. Even if you missed the previous weeks, you're welcome to jump into this wonderful, lively, and rich study! In anticipation of Pentecost, the rest of May will focus on the Holy Spirit. What does the Bible tell us about the Spirit, the wind and breath of God? We will incorporate scripture with movement and other expressive arts to invite more awareness of the Spirit into our daily individual and communal lives. Led by Barbara Rice.

## Friday Night Live 24-Hour Famine

**Fri., May 31, 6:30 PM–Sat., June 1, 12:00 PM • 122 2nd Ave.**

Friday Night Live youth will fast for 24 hours, from Friday to Saturday, to experience a glimpse of what life is like for those who experience hunger regularly. They will watch videos about hunger, participate in activities focused on hunger, and discuss important issues about hunger in the U.S. and in the World. The group will stay overnight on Friday and help distribute the Family Table food boxes on Saturday morning. Each youth will get sponsors to pledge an amount of money per famine hour or a flat rate to fund a mission trip in the summer. For more information, contact Alisa Joyce at [ajoyce@middlechurch.org](mailto:ajoyce@middlechurch.org) or 212-477-0666 ext 300.

## Family Table—Affordable Food for All

**Distribution: Saturday, June 1 • 122 2nd Ave.**

Middle Church has partnered with Family Table Food Ministries to provide families and individuals with affordable food. Family Table assembles a menu each month designed to feed a family of four for a week, or a single individual for nearly a month. The food box is available at a deeply discounted price of \$36. Everyone is eligible—there are no qualifications. For more information and to order, visit <https://familytablefoodministries.com/home>. If you prefer to submit a paper application, forms are available in the sanctuary.

# May

Check [middlechurch.org](http://middlechurch.org) for full details of all events.

## Sundays Before the Worship Celebration

- **Butterfly Prep** – 9:00 AM, 10:00 AM • 122 2nd
- **Open Doors with Ruchi Amin** – 9:00 AM–5:00 PM • 122 2nd
- **MAY 5, 12 – New Member Gathering** – 9:30–11:00 AM • 122 2nd
- **Wee Care** (under age 4) – 10:00 AM • 122 2nd

## Sunday Morning Worship Celebrations at 11:15 AM

If you can't be here in person visit [middlechurch.org](http://middlechurch.org) for the live webcast

- **MAY 5** – “For the Healing of the Nations” • Jacqui Lewis, preacher • Middle Church Choir • MCJJ Gospel Choir • Dance • Communion
- **MAY 12** – FAMILY WORSHIP • “Prison Break” • Adriene Thorne, preacher • Middle Church Choir • New Members Welcomed
- **MAY 19** – PENTECOST • “A Multitude of Voices” • Jacqui Lewis and Robert Chase, preachers • Middle Church Choir • MCJJ Gospel Choir
- **MAY 26** – “Speak the Truth” • Tricia Sheffield, preacher • Middle Church Choir

## Sundays After the Worship Celebration

- **Children's Sunday School** (ages 4–12) – 11:45 AM • 122 2nd
- **MAY 5 – Congregational Vision Meeting** – 12:30 PM – Sanctuary
- **Chat & Chew** – 12:30 PM • Narthex
- **Butterfly Distribution** – 12:30 PM • 122 2nd
- **Adult Education** – 1:00 PM • 122 2nd
- **Children's Chorus Rehearsal** – 1:00–2:00 PM • 122 2nd
- **MAY 19 – MPYA Leadership Training** – 1:00 PM – Intersections

## Art & Soul Sunday Evening Worship at 6:00 PM

If you can't be here in person visit [middlechurch.org](http://middlechurch.org) for the live webcast

- **MAY 5** – “City of Light” • Tricia Sheffield, preacher • Bernice Brooks and friends, art
- **MAY 12** – YOUTH NIGHT “Subway Stories” • Alisa Joyce and Middle Youth, worship leaders • Dionne McClain-Freeney & IllumniNation, art
- **MAY 19** – “Children of God” • Jacqui Lewis, preacher • Tituss Burgess and Jeremy Bertrand-Price, art
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## Weekdays This Month

### Wednesdays

- **Creative Writing Wednesdays** – 6:30 PM • 122 2nd
- **MAY 8 – Middle Consistory Meeting** – 6:30 PM • 122 2nd

### Thursdays

- **MCJJ Gospel Choir Rehearsal** – 7:00 PM • 122 2nd
- **MAY 17 – FemSalon: Our Inner Lives: Spirit, Faith & Action** – 7:00 PM • 238 Thompson St • Marianne Williamson, Sister Joan Chittister, Elizabeth Lesser, India Arie, Maria Ebrahimji, Rabbi Jill Hammer, Helen LaKelly Hunt, and Rev. Jacqui Lewis • Fundraiser for feminist.com

### Fridays

- **Open Doors with Ruchi Amin** – 9:00 AM–5:00 PM • 122 2nd
- **Friday Night Live** (ages 12–18) – 6:30 PM • 122 2nd
- **MAY 31–JUN 1 – Friday Night Live 24-Hour Famine** (ages 12–18) – 6:30 PM–12:00 PM • 122 2nd

### Saturdays

- **MAY 4 – Dance Workshop** – 10:00 AM–4:00 PM • Sanctuary
- **MAY 11 – MCJJ Gospel Choir Rehearsal** – 12:00–2:00 PM • 122 2nd
- **JUN 1 – Family Table Distribution** – 9:00–11:00 AM • 122 2nd

## Need Help? Open Doors with Ruchi Amin

**Fridays and Sundays • 9:00 AM–5:00 PM**

Staff social worker Ruchi Amin offers skilled, caring support in food, housing, and health care transitions. To connect, call 212-477-0666 ext 304 or write a confidential email to [ramin@middlechurch.org](mailto:ramin@middlechurch.org).

# Volunteering—A Way to Give

You make ministry happen, Middle family! For our recent Volunteer Appreciation Sunday, the worship bulletin featured a list of 235 people who were volunteers at Middle Church this year—*100 more people than last year!*

Our radical welcome may be best expressed by the Usher and Greeter team. These faithful volunteers present the first impression for visitors, a rewarding and challenging calling as our congregation grows and our space is limited during renovations.

Usher volunteer coordinator Gloria Moy has worked on the team for many years. Gloria explains the job: “As ushers at Middle Church, we are tasked with greeting, welcoming, and seating parishioners as they come through the door. When parishioners arrive after worship has begun, they are welcomed and asked to wait to be seated in the sanctuary or they are invited to take a seat in the balcony.” People may find seats only during the announcements, the opening hymn, and the Passing of the Peace in order to preserve the worshipful experience and to be respectful to the ministers, choirs, and congregants already seated.

“Greeters also help people find seats, so we may ask those already seated to remove coats or other property from the pew to make room for others. This is especially important during holidays,” says Gloria. “Please help the greeters welcome worshippers as they try to find room in the sanctuary for every visitor.”

Greeters are also the first person a visitor might ask about Middle Church, the sanctuary, or other Middle Church events. A willingness to talk to new people and share information about Middle Church is a valuable greeting skill.

Volunteer opportunities also take place during the week. If you are available to serve in any of the ways listed below or need more information about volunteer opportunities, contact Alisa Joyce at [ajoyce@middlechurch.org](mailto:ajoyce@middlechurch.org) (except as noted).

**Butterfly Meal**—Weekly Sundays Easter–Thanksgiving—Make bag lunches for homeless neighbors at 9:00 AM and 10:00 AM and/or distribute bag lunches in local parks at 12:30 PM.

**Family Table Food Ministries**—One Saturday/month—Receive pre-packaged boxes of food. Distribute boxes, check out, and verify orders are correct.

**Sanctuary Preparation**—Weekly Sundays—Help organize the sanctuary for worship on Sunday mornings at 10:15 AM.

**Ushers & Greeters**—Weekly Sundays—Help welcome and seat Middle Church guests from 10:45 AM–12:30 PM.

**Chat & Chew Preparation**—Weekly Sundays—Help bag and bring brunch from 122 Second Avenue to the Sanctuary at 11:45 AM on Sunday mornings for Adult Chat & Chew.

**Children and Youth Sunday School**—Weekly Sundays—Work with children and youth on Sundays from 11:45–12:30 PM. Participate in special children’s productions, worship, or chorus. (Background check required)

**Facilities**—Weekly Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays—Assist in tidying the Sanctuary after the Sunday worship celebration 12:30–1:00 PM. Assist around the various Middle Church buildings on Tuesdays or Wednesdays anytime between 9:00 AM–4:00 PM. Contact Angel Aviles at [aaviles@middlechurch.org](mailto:aaviles@middlechurch.org)

**Gospel Choir**—Weekly Thursdays—All are welcome to join this volunteer, no-audition-required choir, from 7:00–9:00 PM. The choir usually sings two Sundays per month with special concerts in December and June. Contact John Del Cueto at [jdelcueto@middlechurch.org](mailto:jdelcueto@middlechurch.org)

**Office Administration**—Weekly Thursdays—Help fold the Sunday worship bulletins at 1:00 PM.

**Friday Night Live for Middle Youth**—Fridays—Train to be a youth mentor and work with teens from 6:30–8:30 PM on Friday evenings (Background check required). Participate in occasional social outings. Donate to the youth meal on Fridays.



## Middle Collegiate Church

welcoming • artistic • inclusive • bold

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

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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.

**after-hours care** For after-hours pastoral care emergencies, call the office at **212-477-0666 ext 318** 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.