



...from the Heart

Published quarterly by the Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

Winter 2023 - 2024

On Sunday, November 12, 2023, we voted to modify our name to the Turning Point Church of the Nazarene. This journey began late in 2019. Although hampered by COVID-19, it continued to move along in ever-growing support.

It started with conversations within the pastoral leadership community. Explored, discussed, agreed upon, and voted and approved by not one but two church boards. It then received the support and encouragement of our District Superintendent, Samuel Vassel. From there, it went to the New York Metro District Advisory Board and was approved. Now, you might ask, after all these *thumbs up* and "green lights" by the authorities over us, why does the local church have to vote on it. (We even held an informational meeting the week before the vote.) Well, that is a great question; I am glad you asked!

The answer to the question is it is all about the people! It is about those who attend now and those who will join us in the future. I believe... I trust our people have the heartbeat of our existing culture. They would know if modifying the name to Turning Point, Church of the Nazarene would speak to, tug on the hearts of, and draw the attention of those around us. Also, and more importantly, this is not about rebranding or getting a makeover as much as it is about the transformation and renewal of the hearts of our people to the call of Jesus upon His Body, the Church.

As we head toward a new year, I will leave you with and ask you to ponder these questions:

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Has Jesus Christ turned your life around? If so, how? (If not, wouldn't you like Him to?) If so, wouldn't you want to share that with someone you love, an acquaintance, or maybe a total stranger you sense is hurting and struggling? If you answer yes, that is why... Jesus continues to build His Church here on earth in the hearts of His people.

A closing thought: Church, we have all been brought into a relationship with each other through the Grace of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who has and continues to provide numerous *turning points* in our lives. Thank you for the reminder, Frank Donato! Thus, we want to put it out there! The Church of the Nazarene is synonymous with changed and transformed lives. In essence, the name Turning Point calls us and places us in a **position** to give an account of what Jesus has done for us and what He desires to do in our communities through us. My dear family, this is the number one reason... why Jesus came and gave Himself for us. This is our call and our reason for going on.

Have a Merry Christmas and a healthy start to your New Year!

Pastor Vin



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For our weekly schedule of meetings, check
out our website at www.patchnaz.net

Sunday Service at 10am

Sermons live stream on Facebook. Find us on You Tube.

FOOD PANTRY - MON, WED, FRI - 10am - 2pm 65 Franklin St. (Rear Entrance)

[Coincidence or a Holy Plan Ω εεεεεεεεεεεεεεεεεε

Every year we read the Christmas story from the Bible. We almost don't think about it too deeply, but it is quite fascinating if you think about it. All the circumstances were set in place by God for this wonderful event. "Just so happened" that a census was ordered. Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to register. Again, "it just so happened" that while there, Mary goes into labor, but there is no place for them to stay because of the crowd caused by the census in that city. So, how do you feel about coincidence now? She gives birth to her firstborn son – Jesus – in a barn with animals and all their filth. A beautiful scene if I ever heard of one. And this is the birth of the Son of God. I definitely would not have written the story this way.

Again, coincidentally, there is a group of shepherds living out in the field watching their sheep. They have no clue what is going on in the world or in Bethlehem. They are just out under the stars and keeping their sheep safe. Meanwhile, the Great Shepherd is being born right under their noses near them. They are just hanging out like normal, maybe whittling a stick into the fire or something. Then, out of nowhere...

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! (Luke 2:9-11)

Why would God do something like this? These poor shepherds are minding their own business, doing life as usual out in the fields. Then this "angelic being" shows up and scares the stuffing out of them. Maybe he was dressed in dazzling white and lit up the field – we don't know. Whatever the conditions, they were shaken to the core. They had to be reassured by this "angel" not to be afraid. They have a message for them from God. WHAT? Why would God waste His time on a group of shepherds? They were the lowest form of existence in that culture and time.

Wouldn't it be just like God to do the unimaginable, to deal with the lowest class of people to accomplish His great purpose? Why does He always do the opposite of what we would expect? It isn't ever logical, but it is ordained and perfect.

So, God announces the greatest event in history to a group of low-life shepherds in a field. Who can figure? God gives them the first information regarding the birth of the Messiah of the world. Then, another amazing event happens to confirm all this and add to the fascination. A host of heavenly beings are sent to join the angel and start the first outdoor Messianic worship service ever. They sang the unknown hymn – ***“Glory to God in the Highest and on Earth, Peace, Good Will toward Men.”*** (v. 14)



We read in Hebrews 13:8 – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Why shouldn’t we worship God with the same enthusiasm today? Nothing has changed over millennia. The Savior of the world is always worthy of our praise. We will sing to Him our songs of praise, for He has paid the price for our peace with God. As the angel said, ***“I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.”***

I am excited about our Christmas celebration this year as every year. Corinne and I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a spiritually healthy New Year.
Glory & Praise – Pastor Nick and Corinne :-)

We send our Deepest Sympathy to the following families who have lost loved ones.

Chris Foerth on the passing of his Mother, Jeanne Murphy

The Mahler Family on the passing of Maria’s Mother, Theresa Mazzotta.

Irene Vargas on the passing of her Husband Dan.

Sue Phillips on the passing of her Mom.

The Gazzo Family on the passing of Nereida’s Brother, Charles Ayela.

The Kreamer Families on the passing of 2 Cousins in a fire.

Vickie Ortiz on the passing of her Aunt, Maryann.

The Mahler Family on the passing of Son, Joseph.

Lost and Found

Ten-year-old Ginny was an unapproachable stray cat. Three years passed before she trusted me and let me touch her. In February 2021, she decided she'd had enough fresh air, walked in my house, and never went outside again. As I work on this article she's pressed up against my leg, purring contentedly.



Seven-year-old Skinny Beans is from the same cat group. I've been working to acclimate him to an indoor life.

Like Ginny, he's microchipped and wears a collar and ID tag.

Unlike Ginny, he refuses to stay indoors for long.

Recently, I'd been away. He was inside the whole time so, the day I returned, he couldn't wait to be free again even though my family took great care of him and Ginny. He begged to go out. For the next few hours, he was in and out several times. Then he disappeared. I wasn't worried. Being cooped up indoors that many days was not natural for him.

Later, as I was praying, my cell phone rang. Not recognizing the 800 number, I let it go to voicemail and went back to praying. Then my house

phone began to ring. It was Home Again, the cat's pet chip service. I answered, "Hello?" "Hi! Is this Suzanne?" "Yes, it is." "I have good news! Skinny Beans has been found by John who lives on East Lakewood Street, and I have his phone number so you can call him!" (I later saw they'd also sent an email with the same information.)

The representative was so excited to reunite me with my cat that, although I tried to ease her mind that Skinny Beans wasn't really lost and that I also live on East Lakewood Street, she repeated her information.

I took it down and assured her I'd call John, which I did.

"Hello?" "Hi, is this John?" "Yes." "I'm Sue, Skinny Beans' owner.

Home Again called to let me know you found him?" "Yeah. He's a nice cat. I gave him some treats and I was able to read his tag." I explained about Skinny Beans' history and John mused that the cat didn't look like he'd missed too many meals, so he figured he was lost. "No, he's streetwise and knows his way around." We had a good laugh, I thanked John for his concern and his efforts, and we hung up. Eventually, Skinny Beans was back and ready to come in for the night. He had no idea how much excitement he'd caused, or the efforts made on his behalf.

How often do we, like John and the Home Again team, take time to do more, ask more, or help more in the human lives of those with whom we interact who might be lost inwardly?

Do we mentally cherry-pick the beneficiaries of our compassion based on outward appearances? Are our well-meaning, self-made, stone-etched schedules more important than God's schedule? I wonder how many healing opportunities we miss because we spend too much time speaking undane pleasantries without getting to the heart of the person or the matter. I'm guilty of this myself.



Surface niceties do nothing for deep soul needs, and deep soul needs take time to rise to the surface.
Are we listening for the quickening of the Holy Spirit when He tells us, “Stop! This one needs Me now.”? Are we willing to be used by God to make it possible for the lost to be found?
-Sue Cerruto

Scripture references: James 4:13-17, Galatians 6:9-10, Acts 8:26-31, 2 Corinthians 5:11-21



As the end of the year approaches the Board will be planning our Annual Budget for 2024. Each year we review our expenses in several categories to come up with a Budget to meet our needs and goals. Salaries, utilities, insurance and ministry needs are considered and reviewed. Each ministry is asked to consider what they would like to see in the coming year and asked to provide an approximate cost for being able to carry it out. We have three buildings that all require

maintenance and upkeep as well as utility costs. Then there is always the unexpected, like having to replace our air conditioning units. Fortunately we were able to meet that need with money saved in the Building Fund. The bulk of your offerings collected each week go into the General Fund which help pay for our monthly expenses. All that being said is we couldn't do any of it without you. Inflation has effected the church as well. Costs are up for everything. We have been fortunate to meet these expenses each week.

There are several things that we do not budget for that you have so generously given to above and beyond your weekly offering. Like Crisis Care Kits – bags filled with personal hygiene items for those that have been hit by recent disasters, Christmas Shoeboxes – that go all over the world filled with goodies for kids that otherwise would have nothing special, Alabaster – coins collected to help with buildings on the Mission Field like hospitals, schools and homes for Missionaries. Our Children's Church takes a collection for a child in Pakistan through Compassionate Ministries, our Food Pantry serves families each week and special Thanksgiving meals distributed all through your donations. During our VBS program this summer the week's collection was donated to Lighthouse Mission helping those in our local neighborhoods.

It goes without saying that we can't put a price on our volunteers, who give generously of their time and talents to minister to our church family and help with maintenance and upkeep. You give selflessly and most times without recognition. You are such an important part of our church body, our hands and feet on the ground working.

I don't want to neglect thanking those who watch us and generously give online. This was a very helpful tool during the pandemic and still proves to be working! You might find it easier to set a recurring offering via PayPal. This can be changed at any time. God has been good to our Church family. Pray for us as we try to be wise stewards of the monies entrusted to us. We thank you for your generosity.
Corinne Franco, Treasurer

Carols for Christmas

Everyone has a favorite Christmas album, and mine is Rocky Mountain Christmas by John Denver. The first half of the album are John's take on modern Christmas songs, like the great "Christmas for Cowboys" (makes you want to go camping) and of course that old standard "The Christmas Song" (don't you get sick of it after hearing it for the umpteenth time?). The second half of the album is devoted to traditional Christmas carols, such as "Silent Night" and "Away in a Manger." One song on this side of the album is one I had never heard before; it's an obscure Christmas carol called the Coventry Carol. One of the verses to the carol goes:

"Herod the king, in his raging
Charged he hath this day
His men of might in his own sight
All young children to slay"

That is a line you will never find on a Christmas card. The whole song is in a minor key, and the theme of the carol is a lament for the children killed in and around Bethlehem. It is a message that kind of shocks the listener; each year that I listen to it, however, I gain a better appreciation for it. I feel that sometimes we need to be shocked out of the traditional messages and greetings you get during the Holiday season. In the thick of the Christmas preparation and shopping, I sometimes forget that the Gospel is a world-shocking message.

When I was on a Missions trip to Appalachia some years ago, I heard a message titled, "The Gospel is not good news unless it is *Good News*." Yes, the title is cumbersome, but it is a reminder that the Gospel of Jesus Christ speaks directly to our time and place because it recognizes that this world is sad and broken and, in many ways, evil. That is why it is called the Gospel, literally "*Good News*," an announcement or proclamation that is, in itself Good.

It is true that Herod is long since dead, but the violence the Coventry carol points to is still very much alive today. I think of the situation in Israel and the war in Ukraine and the civil disorder in sub-Saharan Africa. I think of the anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in our own country and the acts of violence that have followed from them. We do not have to look far to witness our capacity for "Us vs. Them." But at the same time, I am thankful that in this anxious and uncertain time in which we are living, there is a message that we can be bold to proclaim: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11, KJV).

We recently voted to change the name of our church to Turning Point Church of the Nazarene, and at Advent we celebrate the greatest Turning Point in human history. In the words of another Christmas song by Andrew Peterson, "Listen to the old, old story; of the power of death undone; by an infant born of glory; Son of God, Son of Man." It is a bold and reckless message to proclaim, that through Christ Jesus death is undone, and the world shall be made new again. As we live toward this new name of our church, let us be standard bearers of this radical, hopeful message that the world desperately needs to hear, and let us be a witness to the Turning of souls from death to marvelous life.

Jon Ollett

LADIES MINISTRY

The leaves are rapidly falling from the trees in their beautiful autumn colors. Of course, this means that winter will be here before we know it. We can so often relate to the changing seasons as we journey on the path of our lives. Sometimes change is hard and it is in those times that we need to surround ourselves with our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

That is exactly what we do each Thursday morning in our ladies group. We are reading a book right now all about encouraging one another and the many different ways that can look. We continue to pray for the many needs of our families and those people that are brought to our attention each week. Often these times are filled with laughter, tears and praise as we lift those needs in prayer and celebrate the answers we have heard. This group has welcomed several new attendees but there is always room for more.

As I write this, we are once again collecting shoeboxes for Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child. This is the 26th year that we are participating in this wonderful ministry to children who might never have received a gift before. Not only do they smile over the items in the box they receive, but they are able to take part in the Greatest Journey classes that share the Gospel with them. Many children, their family members and people in their areas have come to accept Jesus.

A great big THANK YOU to all who have filled boxes this year.

We will be having a Ladies Brunch on Sat. Dec. 9th to celebrate Christmas. This always includes a delicious meal, a fun activity and great fellowship. All ladies are welcome, so mark your calendars now and join us!

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, I pray that we will put aside the busyness of the season and spend time reflecting on what this special day means.

May God bless you always,
Mary Ann

- 136 Operation Christmas Child boxes were collected this year.
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December 10 & 17