

SIDEWALKS

Connecting People. Shaping Ministry. Serving Others.

*A publication of Ponds Reformed Church
Oakland, NJ*

Teaching Luke 4

By Rev. Nathan Busker

In Luke 4 Jesus begins his ministry. After his time of temptation in the wilderness, Luke records that Jesus “began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone” (4:15). That’s it. There is no elaboration about what Jesus was teaching just that he was teaching.

I like Luke 4:15 because it causes me to wonder. What did Jesus teach that everyone praised him? What did he say? I don’t think it would have been hell fire and damnation. Jesus would have shared with them the good news of God. The message of God would have caused people to praise Jesus because it is good news. Sometimes we forget that the news of God is good news for us.

What would we teach about the faith if we were in front of a group of people? What lesson would we impart?

During the pandemic there is concern for how our young members are learning about Jesus and the story of God. On the other hand, the

pandemic has presented the church with an opportunity to right a wrong. To shift the responsibility of teaching sacred scripture from the church back to the household. This was the way one grew in the knowledge of God. It happened at home.

As we are at home, what will we teach to the family? What good news of God will we share? Pope Francis said “If we don’t share Jesus with others, it’s because we don’t understand him.” Maybe the first lesson is for ourselves.

We begin by letting the Spirit share Jesus with us.

Like a party we attend, we know of the host, but have we taken the time to meet the host? Too often Jesus is someone we know something about but haven’t taken the time to get to know on a personal level.

GROWTH OPPS

Bible for Normal People

Ready to return to the basics? Pastor Nathan will present the stories of the Bible that shape and inform our own stories on 11/4, 11/18, 12/2 and 12/16. Email Pastor Nathan for more info

Nathan@pondsnj.org

Women's small group study of the Psalms

Pastor Debbie will continue a women's small group study to look at the Psalms. Space is limited, so email her to register at debbie@pondsnj.org.

Pastoral Cares Leaders needed

PCL's are individuals or couples or even families, who are regularly connecting to a group of other members of the church, through various means (phone, email or notes). To learn more, please reach out to [Pastor Debbie](#) or [Pastor Nathan](#).

Congregational Book Read

NEW BOOKS IN THE LYNN KSANZNAK LIBRARY

Picture Books:

All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold

Discover a school where—no matter what—young children have a place, have a space, and are loved and appreciated. A school where students from all backgrounds learn from and celebrate each other's traditions.

Elementary and Middle Grades:

All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

In this New York Times bestselling novel, two teens—one black, one white—grapple with the repercussions of a single violent act that leaves their school, their community, and, ultimately, the country bitterly divided by racial tension.

Adults:

Caste: the Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson

In this brilliant book, Isabel Wilkerson gives us a masterful portrait of an unseen phenomenon in America. She explores, through an immersive, deeply researched narrative and stories about real peo-

ple, how America today and throughout its history has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings.

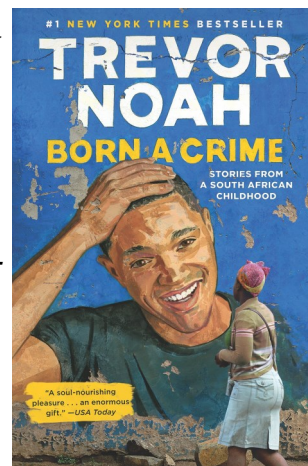
Capital Campaign

As of the end of September 2020, \$290,000 has been pledged. \$201,900 has been received. After many months, we finally received permits from the Oakland Borough to begin the work on the café.

Planning will begin soon for a renovated old fellowship hall to provide a larger food pantry and office space for Rebuilding Together North Jersey.

Book Club

We've started a book club based on the great books we have in the Lynn Ksanznak library here at Ponds! All are welcome to join in!! The book is called "*Born a Crime*," by Trevor Noah. Noah's book gives a personal perspective on apartheid.



"This memoir is indispensable reading because it's a very personal story of survival and overcoming the constraints of your birth, told with wit-tiness and an understanding of the subject of apartheid, and everything that was silly, close-minded, and damaging about it," writes Erica Kallsen of the Journal Advocate. Have this book read by November 11th and we will meet via zoom on Thursday, November 12th at 7pm to talk about it, focusing on how we see it through the lens of our faith.

Thank you and Welcome!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Shayna Durkin for helping us out in the Ponds office this summer! She was instrumental in helping us continue with office management and church communications without skipping a beat!



We also want to welcome Lisa Karpowich into the mix! Lisa will be filling in for Jane while she is out. Lisa comes to us with years of marketing, social media and office management experience. She has worked with various types of businesses from Comedy Central in NYC, to a dental office in Emerson! Lisa lives in town with her husband and two children. Welcome Lisa!

We would also like to congratulate Christina Supko, the new Director of Ponds Valley Preschool! Christina has served in many roles at Ponds including student, parent, Preschool Board Member, Teacher's Assistant, 4's Teacher and most recently Director. "I am so grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a wonderful, nurturing school and to serve the families of Ponds," she said. Welcome!!



Food Pantry Update

By Lisa Karpowich

In the last six months, Ponds food pantry has fed over 150 families, over 300 individuals. We helped feed students at Ramapo College who were stuck on campus because of the

pandemic. We've helped preschool families, feed their families and we did it all with your help! We here in Oakland, have developed partnerships. Thanks to your donations of both finances and food, we've been able to do it together. We received a grant of \$35k to take our little food pantry and expand it all for the benefit of our community.



We want to thank you, the community for your support! We have seen an increase in donations in the past several months, which we are so thrilled about!

Pastor Nathan's video on the grant garnered a lot of interest on Facebook. So much so, that the next day we had several phone calls and a full table by the afternoon! Food Pantry director, Joanne Preiss urges that more volunteers are needed. "We desperately need volunteers from the church or community to restock shelves, fill food bags and help weed out expired food."



"We have a small dedicated group of people who come in when we need them, but we need that roster to increase, especially with the holidays coming up." If you are interested in becoming a food pantry volunteer, please email [Lisa](mailto:lisa@pondsnj.org) at lisa@pondsnj.org

NEXT STEPS

Consistory is exploring moving the food pantry to its own nonprofit corporation thereby having greater access to grants and other support. The Administration Committee is talking with contractors to remediate water leakage through

the basement wall in the old fellowship hall. In the month of October a group began designing a renovated old fellowship hall with an enlarged food pantry and office space for Re-building Together North Jersey. Once the plans are finalized, volunteers will be needed to move the food pantry to a temporary location in the new fellowship hall and the old fellowship hall will be gutted.

Worship Update



After months of recorded worship and a short attempt at in-person worship in July, public worship finally commenced on September 20th! We have had so much fun talking about this on our Facebook page! We've seen a

steady increase in public worship with each passing week! The congregation will continue to worship in-person going forward, we will also continue to live stream via our Facebook page and on Youtube.



Remote Learning

By Rev Debbie Pierce

It's August 31, 2020. School begins in less than 2 weeks and it's finally been determined the children will attend through a hybrid plan – some days physically in the school, some days remotely through their chrome book computers from home. Parents are scrambling. They need to work, there's no one else available to be with their kids during the day, and the internet has been temperamental since Hurricane Isaias blew through town. How could Ponds help?



Pastor Debbie and Pastor Nathan quickly put their heads together, consulted some Ponds parents, went

to Consistory for important input, and a plan was born: Ponds Youth Center (PYC), our aftercare program for middle school students, would shift gears. We could provide a safe location for elementary children to attend school remotely, along with an adult presence to monitor and assist the students with any technical problems that pop up with on-line learning, and supervised playtime once school was done for the day.

Since the beginning of September through PYC we have provided a safe, healthy place for 6 Oakland children on their remote learning days. One parent said, "Your service has been a life



saver!" Another was amazed at how much his child loved it here. "I can't believe how much my son loves coming here! He

gets mad at me if I pick him up too early!" Staci Zeller said, "The program gave the trio a safe space to virtually learn. They loved going and especially loved Mary, who was able to answer any questions they had. Being that Brian and I are both working, the PYC Remote Learning program was exactly what we needed."

Lisa Karpowich, who works in our office, even enrolled her son, Alex when it was desperately needed. "It was becoming impossible for my Husband to focus on his sales calls and assist Alex when he had technical issues at home.



This program has been a life saver for us!! Thank you Mary and Pastor Debbie!! We really appreciate all of your help!"

As our community continues to open up with more relaxed social distancing requirements, the children are returning to daily in-person school attendance. Our mornings no longer have a classroom of students at desks with their headphones on attending math class or taking spelling tests. In the office, we miss the mask-muffled giggles drifting up the stairway in the afternoons. But we can be proud of the way Ponds rose to the challenge of this unique need. And we look forward to what's next as we live out the gospel of Jesus Christ through the care and support of people in our own community and beyond.