



middle notes

The Newsletter of Middle Collegiate Church

JUNE 2017

Celebration! Worship
Sundays at 11:15 AM

Watch live on middlechurch.org

JUNE 4
PENTECOST
VISION SUNDAY
CHILDREN'S DAY
"The Gift of Spirit"
Acts 2.1-13
Jacqui Lewis, preacher
Jerriese Johnson
Gospel Choir Ensemble
Village Chorus for Children
and Youth
Communion

JUNE 11
TRINITY SUNDAY
"Take Me to the Water"
Matthew 28.16-20
Jacqui Lewis, preacher
Middle Church Choir

JUNE 18
FATHER'S DAY
JUNETEENTH
"Broken Chains"
Rob Stephens, preacher
Middle Church Choir
In-the-Middle Choir

JUNE 25
PRIDE SUNDAY
"Dancing the Night Away"
Bishop Gene Robinson,
guest preacher
Middle Church Choir
Jerriese Johnson
Gospel Choir

Sing with Middle!

**JERRIESE JOHNSON
GOSPEL CHOIR**
The Gospel Choir has a
powerful and dynamic
ministry, both inside
and outside the church
walls. **Contact John at**
jdelcueto@middlechurch.org

IN-THE-MIDDLE CHOIR
This choir features singers
from the Middle community
partnered with section lead-
ers from the Middle Church
Choir. Attend rehearsal and
sing in worship the same
day. **Contact Tami at**
tpetty@middlechurch.org

What's Your Sign?

Long before that Mel Gibson movie called *Signs*, back in the olden days when I was a teenager, and there was no such thing as a smart phone, or tweeting, or texting or . . . one would go to a party, in a basement with blue lights and R & B music that had lyrics. And if you were *this* particular one, you were built like a tall, brown Gumby with a big Afro; you'd be totally awkward and wish you had breasts—even little ones—and you'd make your mother buy you a training bra by begging her and getting on her last nerve. You'd wear it under some V-neck ribbed sweater to that party, where any piece of lint in your Afro pulsed with an eerie, neon, nuclear waste-type glow. Some boy, also liny and glowy, would sidle up to you and—rather than ask your name—he'd say, "What's your sign?" And you'd say, with your clarinet-playing overbite, and your big afro, and your limited astrological knowledge, "I'm a Gemini." Then he'd say—straight out of some R & B song—"Cool, Gemini. I'm a Capricorn." And because you had no idea what that meant, you'd say, "Let's go get some punch."

Fast forward to that movie, *Signs*. I can watch it over and over again and see something new. Mel Gibson is an Episcopal priest, a father to a boy and a girl, and big brother to Joaquin Phoenix—a washed-up baseball player. Father Mel's wife is killed in a car accident, pinned against a tree by a car (a driver fell asleep, so tragic). Mel rushes to the scene of the accident, where his wife is saying things, good-bye type things, and her husband is just hanging onto every word. Telling him to swing away, aim high, things like that. When she dies, her husband's faith dies.

He thinks her death is a sign of the profound absence of God.

At those special times I had with Mom, while she was dying and leaving us, she'd wake up from a dream, and say some pretty fascinating things. "Where is my dress?" "Put it between the wall and the picture frame, no between the door frame and the wall." And then, clear as a bell, "Trials and tribulations will come, but everything's going to be alright." "Don't cry, it's going to be alright." That last one—oof—that one really

got me. Once she was staring at me when I thought she was sleeping. I said, "What are you doing, are you watching me?" and I stood up to go and sit near her. She said, "Don't come over here," in this mischievous way. Mom was in so much pain, her medication made her charmingly loopy. But she was right there, in what Black folks call her "right mind" until the end. This was a sign of her resilience and bad-ass strength.

Back to Mel and the signs in that movie. Some aliens—pretty ugly, really—have made signs in cornfields to help each other land. These are not cute ET types. They have an agenda that is not about harmony with humankind. I don't want to give it all away, but suffice it to say that everything the lovely dying wife says—all the things—end up being the things that save the family. The things she says are the things that save Mel from his devastating break-up with God.

In the end, he recognizes the signs of God's presence. Even in the unbelievable, almost unbearable sorrow at the loss of his wife, Father Mel is reminded God is there.

As I write, a man has set off a body-bomb in a concert venue in Manchester in England; 22 are dead, dozens are injured. The sense of security and safety of hundreds of young people, a city, and a country has been murdered. POTUS 45 has fired a man investigating him and is systematically dismantling health care, education, voting rights, environmental justice, and the hope imbedded in the so-called American Dream.

Sometimes I feel like we are in a sci-fi movie, and there are malevolent aliens all about; I feel sometimes like a stranger in a strange land, don't you? Still, I am collecting signs, every day. *Though trials and tribulations come, it's going to be alright.* That, from Mom, is a sign. People help people get out of a stampede in a stadium—a sign. Justice Sally Quillian Yates stands up against the Muslim ban; Palestinian-American Feminist Linda Sarsour speaks out for the rights of Muslims, and Rabbi Sharon Brous speaks out for Linda's



freedom to speak—a sign. People gathered in our sanctuary, and outside our doors at the Street Fair. A church full of African American and Latinx justices and court officers worshiping with us, saying in a chorus, “This is what love looks like”—a sign. When we march down Fifth Avenue on June 25—that is a sign. Butterfly sandwiches delivered with love are a sign of God at work in the world. Our interfaith play dates are a sign that indeed little children will lead us to a future of love, peace, and justice.

Whenever you take communion at Middle Church, or you break bread and share a cup at home, at a bar, or in a restaurant, you enact a sign of the presence of God, who is with you in that essential life-giving moment of nourishment and community. When you are baptized, or when you bathe or shower or jump in the ocean, you enact a sign of the presence of the Holy. God is present in our joy, and in our pain; in our celebrations and in our sorrow; in our grief, and in our working for justice. God is here, God is Love. Period. The pictures gathered in every monthly newsletter are signs of God at work, in and through us.

What's your sign? We'd love to hear of the ways you are experiencing the presence of the Holy in your life in the world and at Middle Church. Tweet me @RevJacquiLewis, find Middle Church on Facebook at facebook.com/MiddleCollegiateChurch, and share at our Revolutionary Love virtual community—L2O.com/org/RevolutionaryLove.

You, Middle family, are a sign, for me, that love is power, that multi-everything communities can thrive.

Thank you!!

Jacqui

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

Trans Sound of Black Freedom Teach-in

Sunday, June 11 • 1:30–3:30 PM • Sanctuary

How is the House | Ballroom community a freedom movement and spiritual response to race, class, sexuality, and gender oppression? Panel will include Michael Roberson and Jacqui Lewis.

Soul Care = Yoga + Praying Dangerously

Wednesday, June 21 • 7:00–9:00 PM • Community Room

Nurture your spirit, body, and mind with self-care and spiritual practices. A Yoga class for all levels will be offered by Allison Mickelson, followed by a session of Praying Dangerously, led by Christina Fleming. **Please bring a yoga mat. Please RSVP to bit.ly/JuneSoulCare.**

Middle Mixer at Major League Soccer

Saturday, July 22 • 1:30 PM • Yankee Stadium

Enjoy a day of Major League Soccer and our Middle family as New York City Football Club takes on Chicago Fire at Yankee Stadium. All ages are welcome at this event! We are offering discounted tickets for \$10 per person—reserve your ticket(s) online today! During this NYCFC Faith and Family Day, Middle will get video board recognition and limited on-field photo spots during halftime! **For more info, contact Marte at msamuelstuen@middlechurch.org. Reserve now! RSVPs needed by June 21 at bit.ly/MiddleSoccer.**

Middle Families = Ministers of All Ages



The Hurd-Tanner family performed a memorable dance to “Man in the Mirror” during the RevLove17 conference morning worship celebration. Many thanks to Lucien, Lutin, Adrienne, and Ellington!



The Butterfly team gets regular help from the Ngai-Wu family. Thank you to Elaine, James, Christian, Emma, and Jordan! To join the Butterfly team, contact Cheryl Cochran at ccochran@middlechurch.org.



The Reller-Engstrom family shared Revolutionary Love online. Caleb, Ella, Iona, and Caitlin told of their experiences at “socially-aware and tolerant” Middle Collegiate Church at <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170405/east-village/houses-of-worship-increased-attendance-post-trump>



A church. Middle Church

Watch for our MetroSource ad in Pride publications this month. Thank you, Jerriese Johnson Gospel Choir and all who march for LGBT justice!

Resurrection, Rebirth and Rising

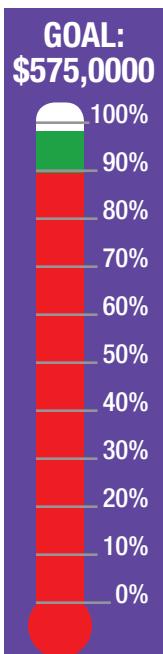
Natalie Runyon is a deacon on the consistory. Below she shares about the impact of Middle's racial and LGBT equality work on her life.

The words *resurrection*, *rebirth*, and *rising* describe my experience at Middle Church. Before I walked in the doors 10 years ago, I was the woman on the street who unconsciously clamped down my purse when there was a group of brown-skinned guys coming the opposite way. The *rebirth* moment is when I knew. The *resurrection* moment was that I made a decision to do something about it. And the *rising* moment is whenever I would see the young men again I would say, "Good morning" and "Have a good day." And it took a lot of times to retrain my nervous system about it.

I learned about the journey of my first trans friend at Middle Church and heard the pain. This was the place where I learned that a black man in a suit can't get a taxi. This was the place where I started to pay attention to power dynamics at work. And when a meeting gets a little pasty, I am the first to say we need other voices here. And I make sure I bring them.

I invite you to join the movement and support this movement financially. Experience your own rebirth, resurrection, and rising moments. For the parents, I have an invitation to you: I have two boys, ages 3 and 7. We want to see more babies growing into leaders here. There is programming here for them from 9:30 in the morning until 2:00 PM.

We have until June 30 to raise the remaining funds to meet our \$575,000 goal. At this writing, **we have raised \$511,063**—89% of our goal—and **we have pledges for 8% more**. You may send your donation in the envelope provided or **donate now—visit bit.ly/power-love**.



June

Check middlechurch.org for full details of all events.

Sundays

- **Butterfly Meal Prep** – 9:00 & 10:00 AM • Social Hall
- **Wee Care** (under age 4) – 9:30 AM–2:30 PM • 3rd Floor Wee Care
- **Family Room** (All Ages) – 9:30–11:00 AM • 3rd Floor Studio
- **The Breakfast Club** (Gr. 7–12) – 10:00–11:00 AM • Offsite
- **In-the-Middle Choir Rehearsal** – JUN 18 – 10:00–10:45 AM • 4th Floor
- **CELEBRATION! WORSHIP** – 11:15 AM–12:30 PM • Sanctuary
- **The Ark** (Gr. K–6) – 11:30–12:30 PM • 3rd Floor • except first Sundays
- **Chat & Chew** – 12:30 PM • Social Hall
- **Butterfly Meal Distribution** – 12:30 PM • Meet at Social Hall
- **Family Room** (All Ages) – 12:30–2:30 PM • 3rd Floor Studio
- **Moms in the Middle** – JUN 18 – 12:45–2:30 PM • Parlor
- **Village Chorus** (Ages 6–14) – 1:00–2:30 PM • Community Room
- **Heritage of Pride March** – JUN 25 – 1:00 PM • Fifth Avenue!
- **Reading the Bible from the Middle** – 1:30–2:30 PM • Sanctuary
- **Trans Sounds of Black Freedom** – JUN 11 – 1:30–3:30 PM • Sanctuary
- **Erasing Racism: Screeing of *I Am Not Your Negro*** – JUN 18 – 1:30–3:30 PM • Sanctuary
- **Interfaith Play Date** – JUN 4 – 1:30–3:30 PM • Bhakti Center
- **Complete the Dream: JJ Gospel Choir Annual Spring Concert** – JUN 4 – 2:30–4:00 PM • Sanctuary – \$20 suggested admission.
- **AA/Big Book Meeting** – 7:00–8:00 PM • 4th Floor Studio

Mondays

- **Momentum Meals** – 11:00 AM–1:00 PM • Lunch and Food Pantry / 4:00–6:30 PM • Dinner and Food Pantry • Social Hall
- **Acting Class** – 6:30–8:00 PM • 3rd Floor Studio
- **NA/Village Spiritual Workshop** – 6:30–7:30 PM • 4th Floor Classroom
- **Pride Mosaic Concert** – JUN 19 – 7:00–9:00 PM • Sanctuary

Tuesdays

- **AA/Step Meeting** – 7:00–8:00 PM • 3rd Floor Studio
- **AI-Anon** – 7:30–9:00 PM • Community Room
- **AA/Closed Discussion** – 8:30–9:30 PM • 4th Floor Studio

Wednesdays

- **Collegiate Pride WeWo** – JUN 14 – 6:15 PM • Marble Church Loft
- **Soul Care** – JUN 21 – 7:00–9:00 PM • Community Room
- **Pub Theology** – JUN 28 – 7:00–8:30 PM • Jimmy's No. 43, 43 E. 7th
- **Meditation on the Lower East Side** – 7:00–8:30 PM • Parlor
- **NA/Our Whole Lives Ahead of Us** – 7:30–8:45 PM • 4th Floor Studio
- **Micah Awards** – JUN 29 – 6:30 PM • Honors Jacqui Lewis!

Thursdays

- **Creative Writing** – 6:30–8:00 PM • 4th Floor Studio
- **JJ Gospel Choir Rehearsal** – 7:00–8:30 PM • Community Room
- **AI-Anon** – 7:30–9:00 PM • 3rd Floor Studio

Fridays

- **NA/It's About Change** – 6:30–8:00 PM • 3rd Floor Studio
- **NYC Pride Rally** – JUN 16 • Foley Square – Join Jacqui Lewis, the Gospel Choir, and BETTY as we kick off Pride in NYC.
- **Collegiate Talent Show** – JUN 23 • Fort Washington Collegiate Church – Contact Rob at rstephens@middlechurch.org for details.
- **AA/Young and Wise Group** – 8:00–9:00 PM • Community Room
- **NA/Finally Found a Home** – 8:30–9:30 PM • 4th Floor Studio

Saturdays

- **NA/Meat and Potatoes** – 6:30–8:00 PM • 4th Floor Classroom
- **AA/Beginners** – 7:00–8:00 PM • 3rd Floor Studio
- **AA/Open Discussion** – 7:00–8:00 PM • 4th Floor Studio
- **Concert to Feed the Hungry** – JUN 17 – 7:00–9:00 PM • Sanctuary
- **AA/Closed Discussion** – 8:30–9:30 PM • 4th Floor Studio



Middle Collegiate Church

50 East 7th Street • New York, NY 10003

Celebrate PRIDE Month with Middle Church



- **TRANS SOUND OF BLACK FREEDOM TEACH-IN** – Sunday, June 11 • 1:30–3:30 PM – The House | Ballroom community with Michael Roberson.
- **PRIDE MOSAIC CONCERT AT MIDDLE CHURCH** – Monday, June 19 • 7:00–9:00 PM – Middle Church singers and artists will raise money for our Pride float and LGBT ministries. \$20 suggested donation.
- **COLLEGIATE PRIDE WEWO** – Wednesday, June 14 • 6:15 PM • *Marble Loft* (274 Fifth Avenue) – Chad Tanaka Pack, Michael Brown, and others, preachers
- **COLLEGIATE TALENT SHOW** – Friday, June 23 • *Fort Washington Collegiate Church* – Contact Rob at rstephens@middlechurch.org for time and to RSVP.
- **PRIDE WORSHIP CELEBRATION** – Sunday, June 25 • 11:15 AM – Guest preacher Bishop Gene Robinson, Middle Church Choir, and JJ Gospel Choir.
- **HERITAGE OF PRIDE MARCH** – Sunday, June 25 • 1:00 PM – Celebrate that we are all made in God's image. "Love. Period." T-shirts available for \$20.



Middle Collegiate Church

welcoming • artistic • inclusive • bold

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

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youtube.com/MiddleNYC

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 **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.