



Homecoming Sunday 2025

*Which one of you would not
go after the one lost? ~ Luke 15*

Dear friends ~

It hardly seems possible, but summer is almost over and soon we will celebrate Homecoming Sunday in the hope of welcoming back those who have been away for a while, and readying ourselves for new programs like Movieola Sundays and new social justice efforts.

Once again, we will read the story popularly known as the Prodigal Child, a story only Luke tells. It is a tale of renewal and redemption, and a story about a God who is really, really glad to see us just show up, no questions asked. Whew! It's a welcome relief to know that that's how God is and there's a place in this world that tries to make that a tangible experience for all of us.

That's what Homecoming is about, right? We all rejoice in the warm welcome that always awaits us in this house of God for all people, and that awaits us in eternity.

That certainly is good news worth sharing, and...there is more to Luke's story.

"Take advantage of reconciliation," says author Amy Levine, "it may not happen a second time." ~ The youngest child in our story gets the chance of a lifetime to start fresh and to be restored to his previous place in the family Luke portrays. It's an amazing gesture on the part of the parent ~ compassionate, merciful, and extremely generous. Some say the ring placed on the child's finger was a signet, meaning the parent even restores this squandering child's ability to conduct business on behalf of the family. That restored trust is amazing and hard, I think, to imagine imitating, if that is some part of Jesus' point in telling this story to the crowds around him.

Many of us probably know what it's like to have our trust in another broken ~ how hard it is to be reconciled in any meaningful way. It's not just personal these days; it's political. The older child in Luke's story makes more sense to those of us in that boat, I suspect, than does the extravagant reception the younger, erring child receives.

Luke's point, of course, is exactly that: the extravagant reception that awaits all the children of God who've ever gone astray in any way, shape, or form and who "come home"/who return to lives surrounded and guided by the Love of God alone. ~ Yet, we are left with the unresolved matter of the child who, as far as we know, just couldn't do that, at least not in the moment, which perhaps makes the question or issue for us: how do we make room in our hearts for all those who have betrayed us and the values we cherish and still hold on to those values and live by them?

The Dutch priest, Henri Nouwen, once said what the youngest child in Luke's story did in demanding an inheritance NOW was tantamount to saying, "I wish you were dead! I can't wait until you die!" Wow! Maybe that's how the eldest felt about his sibling, too, and maybe that's the place for us to start.

(continued on page 2)

The Query Quarterly/Fall 2025

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MCCNY 
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

MCCNY is a member of Metropolitan Community Churches, a global movement of faith with congregations in 28 nations. The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator

Homecoming 2025

(continued from page 1)

Every morning when I pray for God to bring down the mighty, all the world's demagogues destroying the planet as well as whole nations and tribes with war and unspeakable acts of cruelty, I try to make sure God knows I'm not asking God to do unto them the kind of harm and cruelty and injustice they have done and are doing to others. I try to make clear that though I may not have figured it all out, I trust God works for good in all situations and circumstances and can and will make a way out of no way. In short, I try to put my hope in God and trust that God will direct me in a way that makes possible the kind of reconciliation and healing that restores life and resurrects goodness.

M. Robert Mulholland writes that trust in God does not shield us, but empowers us. It enables us to do the things we believe in and call to life the values we cherish.

Maybe none of us can be as amazing as the God-figure in our story proves to be, but maybe that's not the point. Maybe the point is what trust in the love and mercy of God sets us free to do and be.

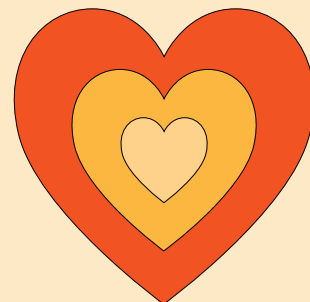
Sometimes we think: there is nothing I can do to end the famine in Gaza or the violence in schools like happened in Minneapolis on the first day back just a bit ago; there's nothing I can do to save Earth from all the horrors of climate change. But the truth is, the Gospel truth is: the love and mercy of God sets us free to be generous the way God is {every cent given to groups trying their best to feed the people of Gaza counts}; to be caring and protective of life, the way God is {all of us can stop voting for people who refuse to enact gun control and end the proliferation of access to weapons of mass destruction, just stop voting for them, period!}. God's love restores us, empowers us, as it did the child in our story, and that's really good news.

If you've been away for awhile; if work or other obligations or just summer's allure has kept you away ~ no worries, no explanations required. Just come home on September 21st to an amazing love and joy that always awaits all of us in this house of prayer.

With love,



The Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner



News from the MCCNY Choir

Most church choirs take summers off, but not the choir at MCCNY!

It has been an exciting season of growth for the choir. Members have been experimenting with playing additional instruments—especially percussion instruments—while singing their pieces.

Also, in addition to the pieces that Music Director John Fischer writes and arranges for the choir, they have performed two original songs written by Song Leader Heidi Siegell so far this year.

And the choir's numbers are growing! Since the beginning of this year, they have added two new members and one returning member.

Finally, John is on the hunt for a new piano for the church! If you have any leads, please let him know.

We hope you will come see the MCCNY Choir in action on Homecoming Sunday! The music will be incomparable, and you'll be joyfully welcomed back!

The QUERY

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Sunday Worship Services at 9 a.m. (traditional)
and 11 a.m. (celebration)

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 1:30 p.m.,
Time Warner channel 57, RCN channel 85

A Letter from the Editor

Dear friends,

Les and I took our annual bike trip through Florida this year—a tradition that lasts the whole of July and includes both a magnificent sense of freedom and an opportunity to experience a new environment in every beach town and city we ride through. This year, we felt a distinct political shift. Far fewer MAGA flags, more people trying to connect. Like the 12-year-old girl and her mom who we met outside of our hotel after the daughter told us she liked the rainbow stickers we were wearing. In Melbourne Beach, we stumbled upon a roadside protest and were welcomed in. We learned that it was a weekly event and we got to experience the many car honks of support. In Key West, we went to a “Good Trouble” rally, in memory of John Lewis, which was solidly organized and staffed by older lesbians. We spoke to one organizer who mentioned that DeSantis was trying to take away their rainbow crosswalks on Duval Street. If he does, she said, “we’ll just paint the buildings rainbow.” Key West has since organized exuberant protests in support of the crosswalks and they plan to fight DeSantis in court—both righteous acts, proclaiming, “this is our home.”

Key West has been hit hard by ICE. Neighbors are collecting funds, food, and hygiene products for immigrants who have been forced to stay indoors because of the threats from Trump’s fascist administration. Like the immigrants getting kidnapped from NYC courts and disappeared, their rightful home is being violently denied them. We have to keep claiming it for and alongside them with all manner of tactics: supporting our immigrant neighbors, protesting, naming and deeply shaming all who are complicit with ICE, and legal action. I’m particularly moved by those videos of whole neighborhoods confronting the masked terrorists and driving them away.

Many queer people personally know what its like to be denied a home, or to live in a home that isn’t safe. We fight back by claiming home, for ourselves and others, every day. Everything we do matters. Like the many protesters who rushed to chalk and then re-paint the crosswalk outside of Pulse in Orlando. Once police had been stationed nearby, a protester chalked his feet and walked across, leaving a rainbow in his footprints. After he was arrested, the courts refused to prosecute him. Acts like this—defiant, enraged, and even cheeky—bring to mind the “hefty dyke” we evoke each year on Stonewall Sunday. Every time the cops slid her in one side of the patrol car she would slide right out the other.

Rev. Pat recently sent a Sunday text messages with a quote from Catherine of Siena: “It’s heaven all the way to heaven.” My first thought was: what a time to talk about heaven! But it strikes me now, at Homecoming, that not only is it heaven all the way to heaven, but it’s home all the way home. Let’s embody it together, every rainbow step of the way.

Love,



Frances



Movieola: Survival of the Thickest

Sept 28 and Oct 26, 12:45 - 2:45, 3rd Floor Gallery

“Big girls don’t cry.... They create space for themselves and the world around them...”

Our upcoming special Movieola series features an offering in September in celebration of Homecoming, 4 half-hour episodes. Then in October the final 4 episodes.

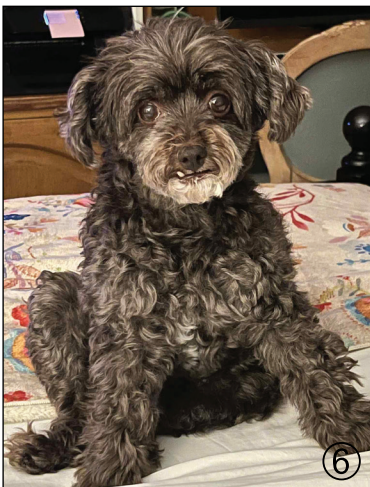
Get ready. Mavis is large and in charge. And her crew is real and for real. She has it all, a man, a career, and just the friends anyone could ever need. Really? At least she thinks so.

Come join us for Part 1 on September 28th and then Part 2 on October 26th.

This year our “Safe & Sound - Hold Your Ground” slogan as our guide is always, always on our side!

And stay tuned for more information about future Movieolas!





FACES of MCCNY

- ① The MCCNY Choir rehearses before the 11am service.
- ② MCCNY is always thrilled when Rev. Miller delivers the Good News.
- ③ Celebrating the Pride month birthdays of Joe Kennedy (age 79) and his animal companion Sammy (age 11) at an after-church Sunday brunch in Hell's Kitchen are John Phelps, Frank diMarco, and Deacon Len Richardson, with Joe and Sammy.
- ④ Rev. Pat made her *Vogue* debut! This photograph, taken by Ryan McGinley at the Reclaim Pride March, accompanied *Vogue's* 2025 Pride coverage. When reached for comment, Rev. Pat remarked: "it should have been Charles."
- ⑤ ASL interpreter Pat Dash signs as the MCCNY choir performs.
- ⑥ Remembering Penelope, beloved companion of Denise Rosner.
- ⑦ Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline with his husband Jonathan Lebolt and their dog LoLo. MCCNY has welcomed Rev. Robin to our pulpit twice this year.
- ⑧ Joshua Cherry-Holmes graduated from middle school . . . and started high school! Congratulations, Joshua!

A Joyful Homecoming

by Kristofer Eckelhoff

When I first moved to New York just over a decade ago, MCCNY was one of the first places I visited. I had experienced a lifetime of spiritual abuse and have even gone through six years of conversion therapy. Getting sober 15 years ago helped me find a relationship with a higher power, but the community at MCC helped me fill a spiritual void that I didn't even realize was there. When COVID ravaged our city, my life was upended. I experienced multiple traumas and hardships, and the quarantined time made it difficult for me to connect with some of my spiritual community. As things had opened, I started to lose my way spiritually. I maintained a healthy connection with my sober community, but finally facing the traumatic past relationship with an abusive megachurch led me to isolate myself from the rest of my spiritual community. This summer was one of the most difficult in my life, and I realized that I had been running from my higher power rather than towards it. When I returned to MCC this August, I was welcomed with open arms—it was as if I never left. Having this relationship with the church not only saved me on many occasions, but it also helped me experience love and community in a way I never thought possible. For that, I am most grateful to MCCNY, and it means the world to me that I am always welcome here.



PRIDE

Featuring babies June and Roxana!



Connecting with and Caring for Botswana and Beyond

by Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline

The Global Justice Institute became engaged in working with an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) congregation in Lorwana, in southern Botswana (pop. 2,000) when I posted information on MCC Global networks about adding environmental justice to our portfolio.

In response, I was contacted by a member of the Council of Elders, Rev. Nokuthula Dhladhla of South Africa, who co-facilitates Global Faith Network workshops for LGBT persons and their families with Rev. Chantell Fortuin, pastor of the AME congregation. Rev. Chantell shared about her congregation's plan to use some of their land to develop an "environmentally friendly, sustainable, eco-system" farming area on their land with Rev. Dhladhla who then connected us.

Their project involves establishing regular water service as well as working to enhance the soil, and then building a greenhouse to assist in raising vegetables and other plants. They also need water tanks to store water to use as needed, as well as erecting security lights around the garden. They plan on installing 10-15 raised beds. Church leaders recognize that working in soil can raise vegetable produce as well as deepening soul connections.

They plan to raise poultry and will be constructing a poultry house and feeders. They hope to use vegetables and chicken to help in providing food for their village (for fighting hunger and for connecting with the wider community). The water service has been connected so they can collect and store water to use as needed.

As part of their desire to strengthen community within the village, they hope eventually to transform the church into a center for lifelong learning and skills development. Their goal is to create a multifunctional learning hub offering a diverse range of educational programs, community dialogues, workshops, and training opportunities. I see this as a project that complements the garden by strengthening human ecological connections.

The congregation has about 35 members, of which 25 are active. It is mostly an older congregation but five younger people are actively engaged (and provide most of the physical labor), as well as another 18 under the age of 18.

This is the first project of our environmental ministry but over time we hope to connect with other congregations and community groups in Africa as well as in other parts of the globe—as we build our mission to promote ecological justice serving the needs of all.

On behalf of the Global Justice Institute, our heartfelt thanks to John Hassell and the Seekers congregation for their grant enabling us to invest in this ministry. There is always need for funds to support the GJI, so please know you can send a check to the church office made out to the Global Justice Institute, either designated for this or another specific project or supporting the institute generally:

**Global Justice Institute
446 West 36th Street
New York, New York 10018**



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GJI Responds to Minneapolis School Shooting

The following statement was released by GJI on August 27th, the day of the Anunciation shooting.

Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis, Minnesota experienced deadly gunfire this morning. A shooter opened fire during a Mass that was being held to mark the beginning of the school year. The shooter fired multiple weapons from outside the church, through the windows, at the people inside. Two children were killed (may angels receive them and may God hold their families close), and fourteen more were injured as were three octogenarians (God bless them). It is believed that all the injured will survive.

The suspect, identified as 23-year-old Robin Westman, died at the scene from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The FBI is investigating the shooting as an act of domestic terrorism and a hate crime targeting Roman Catholics.

There are reports that the shooter's weapons had etched into them anti-Jewish, anti-Hispanic, and anti-African American terms.

Added to this deplorable crime of ugly hatred is the outrage of people using the incident to incite further hatred against transgender people.

Robin's name was once Robert, but it was legally changed in 2020 to Robin. 2019 court documents show that Robin identified as female and she wanted a name that reflected that. Name changes and gender expansiveness do not cause nor encourage violence of any sort.

Robin was also Caucasian, and American, as are the overwhelmingly majority of mass shooters. To ignore those facts while trying to use an attacker's possible Trans* experience and identity to demonize transgender people is simply another act of unjustified hatred, an attempt at gaslighting.

The shooter was apparently an overt racist and antisemite, and seemingly anti-Christian (Robin attacked a Christian Mass). The shooter's gender is irrelevant.

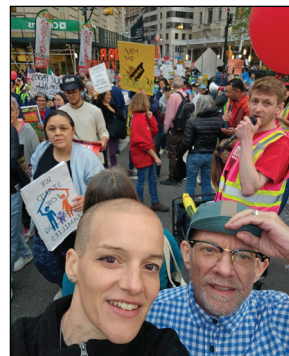
This shooting comes as the Minneapolis area has seen a recent increase in gun violence. The Council of Bishops of the Global Justice Institute continues to pray for and work for sane gun safety laws and policies and for the healing of the epidemic of violence in our nation. May God grant us wisdom and compassion in these turbulent days. And may we be willing to become the answer to our prayers.

In Christ's service,

Presiding Bishop Pat Bumgardner, Bishop Jim Meritt, Bishop Robert Griffin, Bishop Durrell Watkins

MCCers REPRESENT!

MCCers held their ground at the following protests: No Kings (NYC), No Kings (Glen Ridge, NJ), Hands Off (NYC), May Day Strong (NYC), and The Pro-Democracy Rally (Melbourne, FL) as well as a Jericho Walk at Federal Plaza (NYC) and Prayer Vigils at the Everglades concentration camp.



HOMECOMING ♥ SUNDAY! ♥

September 21st at 11am

*“Celebrate
Me Home”*

Wonderful music and lots of Good News!

Gala reception to follow!



MCNY

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