

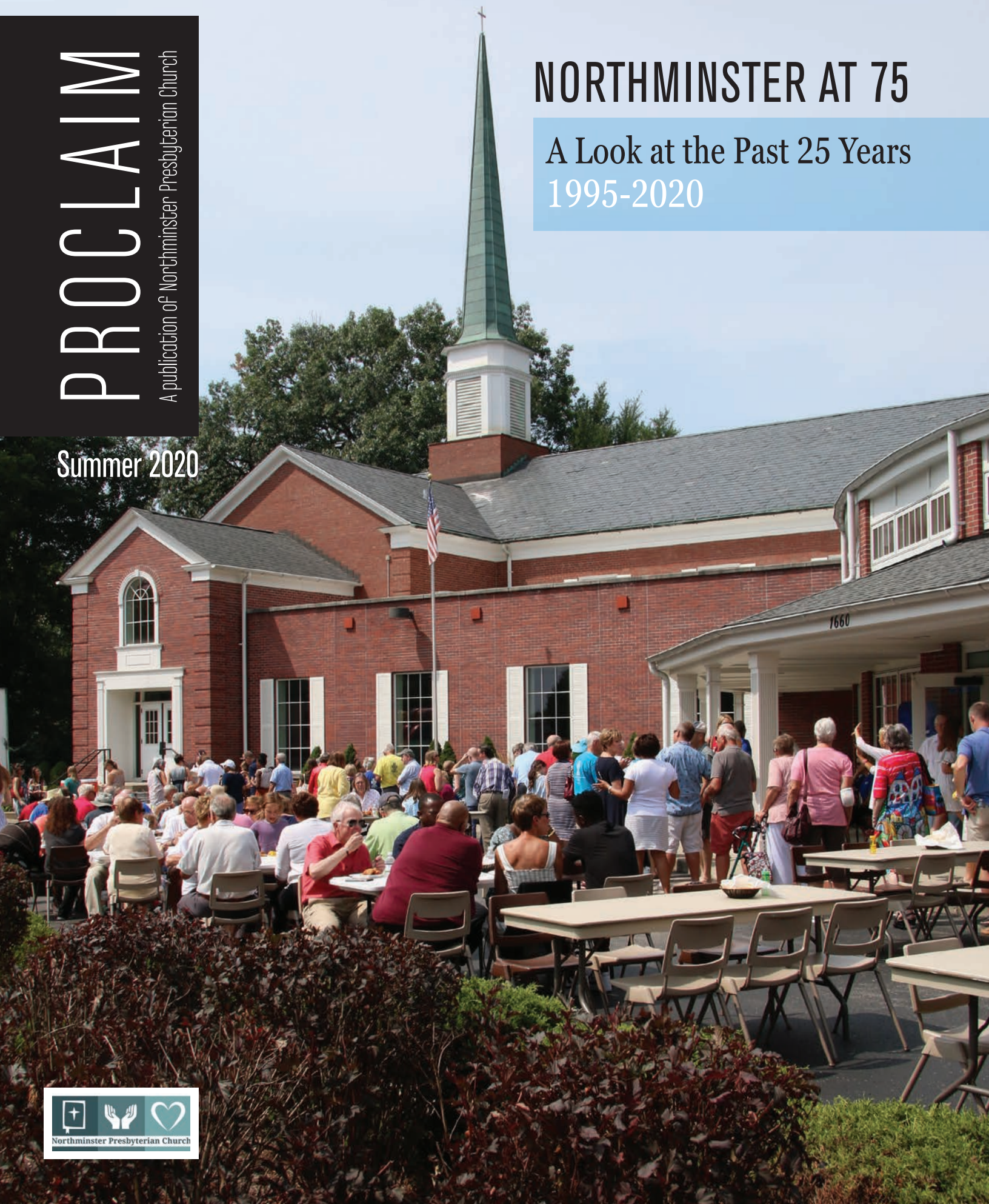
PROCLAIM

A publication of Northminster Presbyterian Church

Summer 2020

NORTHMINSTER AT 75

A Look at the Past 25 Years
1995-2020



The Third Quarter...
Century!

NORTHMINSTER 1995-2020

Yes, Northminster Presbyterian Church is celebrating its first 75 years. In this issue of Proclaim, we look back on the most recent 25, not the full 75. Why? Because the first 50 have already been done, and done well, in Northminster: Celebrating Fifty Years, available on the church website. So this is a supplement. We hope it can stand on its own as a worthwhile look at our past, but for the full treatment, check the 50th birthday edition, too.

One other note. Even though this issue covers only a third of our history, it can't capture the whole Northminster story during that time. So many good people have been doing so many good things that we can't possibly mention them all within the page limits of this magazine (or your likely attention span as readers). But we hope this sampling will trigger memories, help us appreciate the rich life of this church, and help inspire us to even greater service in Christ's name in our fourth quarter-century.

John Purcell, issue editor/writer

Writers—Monica Brase, Debbie Stuart Everett, Terri Hubbard and Maureen Purcell

A New Front Door to the Future

Even for those who have been around for decades, it can be hard to remember what Northminster looked like in 2005. Try it.

- Let's say that, on your typical Sunday these days (assuming no organ construction or pandemics), you park in the south lot, walk into the Gathering Place, pick up a bulletin by the welcome table, hang your coat under the grand staircase, grab a coffee or donut hole while greeting friends, hurry up the ramp (just ahead of the choir), turn right at the digital bulletin board and coat racks, pass the balcony/basement stairs, and enter the Narthex and Sanctuary. In 2005, if you'd followed anything like that path, you would've been OUTSIDE ALL THE WAY until the balcony/basement stairs.
- Or what if you now park in the north lot, enter the north door to the Christian education wing, then head for the Gathering Place and follow the other pre-worship routes and routines. In 2005, if you'd tried that . . . well, you just wouldn't have. No north parking lot or north entrance. Not even a sidewalk along Kingsley.
- Do you remember how you used to get from the Sanctuary to Calvin Hall? An African ceremonial mask, but no ramp; no Gathering Place; no elevator; no wide curving stairs; no lower hallway; no east-side doorways into Calvin Hall.

We could go on, but you get the idea.

In 2009, on the Sunday just before Thanksgiving, we dedicated the improvements. The hardhat phase had taken 18 months from groundbreaking to dedication, but the project had been in the works long before that. You can trace a direct line back to at least 1999, when the church completed its ReVision planning process in preparation for calling a new head pastor.



On May 11, 2008, members helped break ground for the major upgrade.

As part of the 1999 planning, the church considered possible relocation, but decided to remain on East Kessler and to develop a plan to add parking, improve accessibility, and make other upgrades. In 2000, the church authorized the purchase of properties, as available, in the Northminster block, expecting that process to take up to 10 years, and formulated a facilities master plan with four possible phases.

Very quickly, the projected timetable proved far too pessimistic. Within weeks,



Northminster dedicated the new Gathering Place, ramp, and other improvements on November 22, 2009.

the first house came available, immediately to the north on Kingsley Drive. And if that weren't miraculous enough, the next two houses on Kingsley hit the market within months. By early 2001, we had purchased three adjacent houses (four lots in all), which we rented out while awaiting further opportunities. An adjacent one on Ralston came in 2005.

In August 2005, Northminster launched an intensive process to decide what to do with the acquired properties and how to pay for it. We studied When Not to Build: An Architect's Unconventional Wisdom for the Growing Church, sought input from staff and lay leaders, analyzed existing space use, conducted listening sessions and three congregational meetings, adopted a 10-point wish list of improvements, and in early 2006 appointed a building committee—Bob Gudgel (chair), Abby Auer, Don Craft, Pat Freije, Delores Heaton, Andy Longo, Bill Lord, Jim Mann, John Purcell, and Linda Theobald.

By June 2007, the building committee had selected Steve Robinson of URS Corp. as



"The new Gathering Place is loved by all and is used all the time. Its beauty more than met our expectations! We give thanks that the Holy Spirit guided us each step of the way." —Pat Freije



our architect, approved major design concepts, and presented them to the congregation: a north parking lot; a new "front door" and a large activity space at the intersection of the church's two existing wings; improved accessibility, including an indoor ramp, elevator, and staircases linking both wings and all three levels; reorganized church offices and pre-school areas; and an array of other enhancements.

After the church completed a \$2.6 million capital campaign, the project shifted from planning to implementation. By the spring of 2008, we had selected Wurster Construction as construction manager, completed rezoning and alley vacation, broken ground, and begun house demolition.

Just in time for the Great Recession. As the economy locked up, we faced an agonizing decision. We hadn't yet signed final construction contracts, and we had good reason to worry about pledge payments, lender financing, and subcontractor/supplier survival. On October 7, 2008, we convened an emergency leadership meeting. We had to make a go/no-go decision, and we had to make it that night. We prayed and expressed fears and examined options and prayed some more. And decided to go.

A little over a year later, it was done. In Pastor Teri's description, it "changed the whole character of the church."

Try to imagine Northminster without those changes. Go ahead.✧

NORTHMINSTER 1995-2020

TIMELINE

Some Northminster highlights over the past 25 years.

1995

- Northminster marks its first rotation as part of the Interfaith Hospitality Network.



1996

- PC(USA)'s General Assembly proposes an amendment to the Book of Order, later ratified by a narrow majority of presbyteries, effectively prohibiting gay and lesbian ordination.
- Shortly before Christmas, senior pastor Fred Mathias and wife Clea are found murdered in their home.



1997

- In June, Ron Smith joins Northminster as transitional senior pastor.
- The PC(USA) General Assembly commemorates Fred and Clea Mathias, including with jazz legend Dave Brubeck's performance of an original composition dedicated to them.



1998

- The church's first website goes live.
- Northminster purchases its first church van.



From Darkness Toward the Light

Christians are not, by virtue of their faith, immune to tragedy, any more than other human beings are. Any more than Jesus, himself, was. The key, as our transitional pastor would later say, is “what are you going to do with what happens to you?”

It was shortly after the church’s 50th birthday that darkness closed in on Northminster. For our associate pastors, the horrific news came from a Fire Department chaplain, near midnight on Sunday, December 15, 1996. For serving elders, it came by 4:00 a.m. telephone calls, summoning them to an emergency Session meeting. For most of us in the congregation, it arrived with morning papers, news broadcasts, or frantic calls from friends and family.

That Sunday evening, Northminster’s senior pastor, Fred Mathias, and his wife Cleta had participated in an ecumenical Christmas service at Christ the King, then headed home. Later that night, neighbors reported flames coming from the Mathias home. When firefighters arrived, they found not only a second-story fire, but also the bodies of both Fred and Cleta, bound and murdered. Apparently, their return had surprised burglars, who then tried to cover up those crimes with arson and murder. Shortly after midnight, the chaplain reached associate pastor Don Durrett, who with his wife Nancy rushed to the Mathias house, as did Whitewater Valley Executive Presbyter Jill Hudson and her husband Jay. There they confronted the crime scene, absorbed the initial

“Without a doubt, the single most dramatic and influential event of the church in the past twenty-five years was the tragic and senseless deaths of Fred Mathias and his wife Cleta. I was extremely impressed by the extraordinary response and support of the congregation and the ecumenical religious community. With many prayers and the guidance of our heavenly Father, the healing process brought new commitment and strength to the church.”
—Don Durrett



Rev. Don Durrett delivered the meditation at a Service of Witness to the Resurrection of C. Frederick Mathias and Cleta R. Mathias.

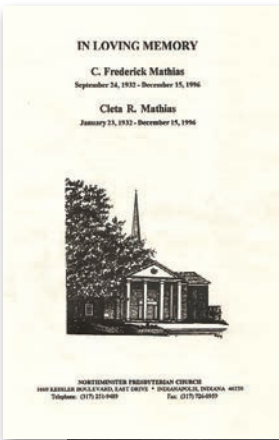
personal shock, and began the agonizing process of helping chart the congregation’s path through the tragedy.

At the 5:30 a.m. Session meeting, Don and Jill led Session members through triage decisions—to keep the church open for those who needed to gather, to ask area Presbyterian ministers for help, to hold a prayer service that evening, and to telephone every member about the tragedy and the service. The Session also asked elder and trustee Mark Moore to deal with the media and law enforcement. All agreed that the church should “exemplify in our public presence the healing and forgiving love of Christ—even in the face of such a despicable act.”

But it wasn’t easy. One elder left the Session meeting, went home, and took down the family Christmas tree. A year later, a little girl would remind her mother that Christmas is “when the robbers come.”

As that Monday wore on, many of us came to the church to offer help. Or just to be there. Some brought children who needed more than school that morning. Outside help arrived, too—area ministers (from as far as Lafayette), a St. Vincent Hospital crisis response team, and other professionals. And food.

That evening, despite a heavy snowfall, Northminster family and friends gathered to pray, hear scripture, and give and receive comfort. Pastors led worship, but preached no sermons. Quietly and together, we struggled with our emotions and our deepest



Approximately 1,000 people attended the Mathias service in December of 1996.



beliefs and how to resolve them in confronting the dark realities we now had in common.

On the following Thursday, Northminster held the Service of Witness to the Resurrection of C. Frederick Mathias and Cleta R. Mathias. It attracted an estimated thousand people,

filling the sanctuary and narthex and, with closed-circuit television feed, overflowing into the chapel and Calvin Hall.

Don Durrett delivered the meditation, acknowledging “the questions in our minds and hearts” and assuring us that “while the tragedy of their deaths confounds us, it broke the heart of God.” Associate pastor Donna Wells reflected on the life and ministry of Cleta Mathias, her dedication to family and Fred’s ministry, and her love for pampering guests. Jill Hudson eulogized Fred Mathias and reminisced about the long Scottish preaching cloak he wore after Christmas Eve services. Jill had often told him, “Fred, I want that cape,” and the 6’5” Fred would say, “my dear, we could put four of you under this cape.” Jill closed her eulogy by saying, “Fred, few of us could ever fill your cape, much less your shoes.” (Later on, Jill did receive the cape, a gift from the Mathias family.) As the service ended, a lone bagpiper walked slowly from the sanctuary’s front entrance, turned down the center aisle, and continued to the narthex, playing “Amazing Grace.”

Afterward, one reporter voiced a common media reaction. “This was a real surprise. It was a celebration of two lives, not at all like the funeral I expected.” And Jill Hudson expressed a feeling shared by most of us: “God’s presence was palpable to me. I had some peace in that.”

In the weeks that followed, Northminster launched several key initiatives. High on the



list was finding a temporary head pastor. By 1997, the PC(USA) had no experience at all with replacing a murdered senior pastor. Normally, a congregation would select an interim pastor to serve for a year or two. But to many, including Presbytery leaders, Northminster’s unique experience called for a longer transition, as well as a strong, experienced head pastor. With some dissent, the Session asked the personnel committee, chaired by John Smith, to seek a “transitional pastor” who would give as long as five years to shepherding Northminster through its darkest phase. The Session also appointed a care team, led by elder Marianne Hedges, to counsel grieving individuals and advise church leaders on responsive programming. And it established a reward fund and later the Mathias Fund to assist ministry students financially.

As Easter 1997 approached, we sent out special cards to the community: “Everyone has a few dark days once in a while. How do you overcome yours?” Plus an invitation. “For three days, the entire world was in darkness after Christ’s death. Please join us at Northminster Presbyterian Church this Easter Season as we experience new light and hope through Christ’s Resurrection.”

Outsiders continued to offer us support.

1999

Teen defendant gets 93 years

- ▶ In connection with the Mathias murders, Paul Brightman pleads guilty to felony murder, with a 65-year sentence; Sean Rich is convicted of four felony counts and sentenced to 93 years.
- ▶ The church conducts a ReVision self-study, engaging nearly 300 members in small group meetings and a two-day Columbia Club retreat and adopting a vision statement with three-year goals.

- ▶ The “Building on Our Northminster Spirit” capital campaign raises more than \$800,000 to fund organ repair, Calvin Hall and kitchen upgrades, presbytery mission projects, and other needs.
- ▶ Don Durrett retires after more than 33 years as Northminster associate pastor, is named Associate Pastor Emeritus, and is celebrated by hundreds at a Ritz Charles banquet.



2000

- ▶ With Foundation assistance, Northminster acquires three contiguous houses on Kingsley.
- ▶ Northminster launches its health ministries, with a parish nurse, health cabinet, and office.
- ▶ Sharing of the Peace becomes part of worship.



2001

- ▶ With encouragement from Bob and Marilyn Rogers, Northminster starts a Stephen Ministry program, equipping lay volunteers to provide spiritually based counseling to members facing stressful life issues.
- ▶ The church begins its School 55 partnership to provide teacher and student support.



From Darkness Toward the Light (continued)

Bob Hunter, a Second Presbyterian pastor and counselor, led our Session meetings. A Montana Presbyterian congregation sent 34 origami Peace Cranes in a rainbow of colors, which adorned our communion table for weeks. At the PC(USA) General Assembly, jazz legend Dave Brubeck performed an original composition dedicated to the Mathiases.

Meanwhile, the Sheriff's Department was investigating the crimes. Deputies interviewed church staff and several in the congregation, including five youth who, on the previous Saturday, had picked up a rug the Mathiases were donating to the church. Mark Moore began summarizing the investigation after worship each Sunday, but by mid-February, with few details emerging, reduced the frequency to monthly.

With associate pastor Donna Wells departing in late January, Don Durrett shouldered an enormous load, preaching most Sundays and providing administrative leadership. The personnel committee delivered relief in April, bringing on Nancy Howard as an interim associate pastor and announcing Ron Smith as transitional head of staff.

On June 1, Ron preached his first Northminster sermon. "My first and greatest responsibility as your pastor," he said, "will be to help you find a voice to bear witness, a voice that will well up out of the darkness of this tragedy as a great song of faith to all those around us who need a faith to live by."

Just as Ron was settling in, the



Our communion table displayed 34 multicolor origami Peace Cranes, a gift of comfort from a Montana Presbyterian congregation.

Indianapolis Star published a status report on the investigation, disclosing that deputies had focused from the beginning on a troubled youth from our own congregation. When that news surfaced, the darkness of the crimes, themselves, deepened. Not only were we the home of the murder victims; we were also the home of the murder suspect.

But the church continued its ministry. In Ron Smith's words, "Together, we will unwrap the wounds of our hearts so that people all around us—wounded and hurting people—will see and know that they can come to Northminster Church with their broken hearts and needy lives and they will be welcomed here in Christ's name."

On the Feast of the Epiphany, a police

officer posed for a photo by our communion table, knee-deep in teddy bears that we were donating to IMPD's "Bears on Patrol" program. A few days later, some of our bears went to nine babies and toddlers who had witnessed the murders of their daycare providers.

The investigation breakthrough came on January 27, 1998, as news outlets reported that a teen named Paul Brightman had been arrested, had confessed to the Mathias burglary, and had named Sean Rich as the instigator and killer. Rich, a Northminster teenager, had a troubled past, including juvenile offenses, and Fred Mathias had made special efforts to help him and the family. He had been among the youth who picked up the rug at the Mathias house. Unlike Brightman, Rich denied everything.

That night, law enforcement and media representatives returned to the church, as we gathered again for a prayer service and began preparing for the trials, legal and otherwise, to come.

Another year passed before Paul Brightman came to trial in January 1999. As recommended by both Northminster and the Mathias family, the Prosecutor chose not to seek the death penalty against either defendant. In preparation, the church organized a prayer vigil, including to "pray for the accused and their families." From the pulpit, Ron Smith told of a neighbor who had called, wanting to participate, but asking why she should pray for the accused. Butler



professor/author Susan Neville recounted Ron's answer and her reaction in *Nuvo*.

"The cross," he said, "and for the first time in my life, skeptic that I am, the cross was transfigured through juxtaposition I understood again the greatness of Gandhi, of Martin Luther King, of nonviolence, of the words. Forgive them, forgive us, for we know not what we do"

After five days of trial, Brightman pled guilty to two felony murder counts, with concurrent 65-year sentences.

The second trial started a month later, as Sean Rich faced charges of murder, criminal confinement, theft, and arson. After more than a week of trial, the jury found Rich guilty on four felony counts, but deadlocked on seven, apparently confused over the judge's instructions. Despite the inconsistent verdict, the judge found that the aggravating circumstances "clearly warrant imposing consecutive sentences for a total of 93 years."



By then, our long walk through the valley of the shadow had changed Northminster. Fred and Cleta Mathias had devoted themselves and ultimately their lives to their faith. Confronting the primal questions of life and death and of good and evil, we had lived our beliefs as never before and emerged as a more committed and compassionate family of faith. The evidence appears in the stories told—continuing stories of mission and openness and joy—throughout this issue.

To mark the 20th anniversary, we held a Service of Remembrance for Fred and Cleta. As we said then collectively, "the darkness of December 15, 1996, has not overcome the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." ♦

"The year after the Mathias' deaths, I was helping with Clothe-a-Child at Lafayette Square. There was a young girl, maybe 4 years old, the younger sibling of one of the students participating. We were in MCL for lunch, I was holding the little girl in my arms, and we were approached by a TV camera and reporter, asking about the anniversary of the Mathias deaths, how that was affecting me and the congregation. Holding tight to the child, I acknowledged our grief, yet our determination as a congregation to continue this important community outreach. It was what Fred and Cleta would have wanted us to do."

—Dolly Craft



Elder Mark Moore managed communications with law enforcement and media.



Executive Presbyterian Jill Hudson helped lead Session members through key decisions.

2001
CONTINUED

- ▶ Northminster forms a partnership with the Northern Quintanna Roo Presbytery in Mexico to sponsor development of a new church and send financial help and work teams.
- ▶ Ron Smith steps down as Northminster's interim pastor, with a celebratory retirement event at the Riverwalk Banquet Center.

2002



- ▶ As the year opens, Teri Thomas joins Northminster as its senior pastor.

- ▶ The youth group hosts its first Italian Night to help fund youth mission trips.



- ▶ The House, sponsored by Northminster and other northside congregations, opens in the Glendale mall as a Christian coffeehouse for youth.
- ▶ Northminster begins offering a jazz service at 5:00 on Sunday afternoons, initially in Calvin Hall and later at The House.



2003

- ▶ Ruth Moore and Larry Moslener are installed as associate pastors, filling out the permanent pastoral staff for the first time since the Mathias tragedy.
- ▶ Sound and Spirit begins as a program of musical arts and outreach.



The Southern Baptist Marine

In 1997 we had deep healing to do, and Ron Smith dropped everything to lead us through it.

Born during the Depression, Ron spent his youth in the Southwest. He interrupted college for the Marines, then returned on a football scholarship. By graduation, he was already ordained—as a Southern Baptist minister. He pastored a few small churches and graduated from Southwestern Baptist Seminary, before going through a crisis of doubt, particularly about the Southern Baptist stance on civil rights. At a church convention, he heard a theological challenge by a nuclear physicist and “spent time in the hotel bar drinking rum and coke.” Before long, he knew he belonged in ministry—that “Jesus Christ has taken hold of me and he won’t let go”—but not in that denomination.

Drawn to the Presbyterians’ decentralized governance and scholarly traditions, Ron pastored small Houston churches, the First Presbyterian Church in Joliet, Illinois (while earning his doctorate from McCormick Theological Seminary), and First Presbyterian in Rochester, Minnesota (also serving on Mayo Clinic’s review board).

By late 1996, Northminster’s personnel committee had been preparing for Fred Mathias’s retirement, expecting to seek an interim head pastor for two years. But after the Mathias tragedy, the committee—John Smith (chair), Gary Bates, Jim Beattey, Winston Becker, Carol Campbell, Ann Dunipace, Jim Edison, Ted Engel, Ray Hale, David

Johnson, Susie Koriath, Lowell Lumley, Paula Mann, Marilyn Mart, Gayle-Sue Murphy, and Dave Scott—started looking for a longer-term “transitional” pastor to guide Northminster through its unprecedented challenges. They found Ron Smith.

We knew immediately that we had a skilled preacher, seasoned with cadences and emotional surges of the Southern Baptist preaching tradition. And we felt his comforting determination to walk us forward. “I will listen to the things that are in your hearts so

“Are we a church or a country club?” were the exact words of Interim Pastor Ron Smith from the pulpit. It got very quiet except for a few whispers and some uncomfortable shuffling. This question came from a genteel former Marine, from a man who was responsible for helping to rebuild the fragile psyche of our church after the Mathias murders. This man and this question started me on a journey that changed my life.”

—Josh Hill

that I can help you practice good stewardship of the pain you have experienced in the murder of your pastor and his wife.”

“How can we practice good Christian stewardship of all the things we experience—the evil as well as the good? We have an example

before us in Jesus Christ who suffered the pain and humiliation of crucifixion. Yet, because he offered those horrible experiences to God, his death has become a door to life for all the world.”

At first, he addressed our grief expressly and often, but over time shifted toward a message of compassion for others. He also guided us through a rigorous planning process and a capital campaign. And in a final twist, he returned to earlier themes to confront the evil of September 11, 2001.

Ron’s wife Jinnie and stepdaughters Hannah and Meghan Remtema also became integral parts of Northminster. In time, Megan entered the ministry herself and became a Mayo chaplain.

Our Columbarium now holds Ron Smith’s ashes—his “interim” presence made permanent at Northminster.✦



The Record Holder

Technically speaking, Don Durrett had a record 33½-year run at Northminster, serving as associate pastor from mid-1966 to year-end 1999. But we all know there’s more to it—nearly twice as much.

For one thing, Don started here sooner, when he was our youth minister for two years (1960-61) while a Christian Theological Seminary student (where he earned masters and doctoral degrees). But mainly, his service has lasted long past his retirement. Still going on, in fact. Even though Presbyterian pastors aren’t members of particular congregations, he (along with wife Nancy, who is a Northminster member) has continued to worship with us, has regularly pitched in at mission projects like Clothe-a-Child and Back-to-

School Extravaganza, and has been a part of major moments in our individual and congregational lives. As recently as last fall, he joined Teri Thomas in celebrating P.E. MacAllister’s memorial service. Don’s done a lot for us.

Don brought many of us into the church, performed countless baptisms, marriages, and funeral services, visited us in hospitals, and gave us decades of spiritual leadership and friendship. He led many initiatives at Northminster, including international mission trips, the launch of Northminster’s Foundation, Clothe-a-Child and other mission projects, and our first website. And when special causes or projects needed funding, he would “just call some people and invite them to lunch.”

But for many of us, his most compelling service came in the immediate aftermath of



Don Durrett served longer than any other pastor in Northminster history.

“After living away from Indianapolis for several years, Jim and I moved back and were looking for a church. When we stopped by Northminster and walked in the back door, Don Durrett immediately greeted us by name. We were so impressed by that welcome that we decided to rejoin the church.”

—Jo Wright



Even after hanging up his robes, Don and wife Nancy have played an active role at Northminster.

the Mathias tragedy. Not only did he have to assume many of the senior pastor functions, but after Donna Wells’ departure a month and a half later, Don became our only pastor for a key period. We had a few guest preachers for worship, but Don was often in the pulpit, provided day-to-day leadership, and gave us needed stability—all while having scant time to see to his own healing needs.

Next time you see him, you might want to say thanks. And look for him to make a return visit to our pulpit to help celebrate our 75th anniversary.✦

2003
CONTINUED

- ▶ At Jim Beattey’s suggestion, Sunday worship adds the Joyful Noise Pail to receive clanging contributions from the children.
- ▶ The church adopts a new short-form vision statement—**“Seek, Serve, Embrace.”**



- ▶ The church sponsors its first Trunk-or-Treat evening at Halloween.

2004

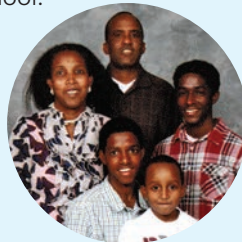
- ▶ A new HOST program launches with “ministers of hospitality” to welcome visitors.
- ▶ Pastor Teri presides over Northminster’s first Pet Blessing in Broad Ripple Park.



2005

- ▶ As part of Vacation Bible School, a large volcano appears in the south parking lot—the first of many oversize constructions, eventually including an elephant, ark, pyramid, Jordan and Nile Rivers, inverted rollercoaster car, and giant eyeball.

- ▶ Northminster sends two mission groups to Principe de Paz (Prince of Peace) Church in Mexico—a youth contingent to help construct church walls and an adult/youth group to help with Vacation Bible School.
- ▶ Northminster begins sponsoring the Wube family, who arrive in December from an Eritrean refugee camp; led by Susie Koriath and Jack Wineman, church members provide clothing, food, shelter, furnishings, and other transitioning help.



The Gospel of Thomas

It might have come as a surprise to some that Northminster, at the turn of the millennium, would call a woman as its senior pastor—the first large Presbyterian church in Indiana to do so. But it shouldn’t have been a total shock. By that time, we had had several female associate pastors, including Margaret Towner, the first woman ordained as a minister in the national denomination. And many women had served as key lay leaders, including the pastor nominating committee’s chair and four other members.

The nine-person committee—Paula Mann (chair), Alan Becker, Debbie Stuart Everett, Jerry Gray, Bob Gudgel, Chuck Keene, Teresa Sherow, Barb Stayton, and Gail Weiner—had been meeting weekly for over two years, learning the Presbyterian search system, studying our needs, preparing

job-posting materials, reviewing over 300 applications, listening to recorded and live sermons, and interviewing candidates. At one point, they issued a call, only to have the chosen candidate withdraw.

Meanwhile, Teri Thomas was in Washington, D.C., serving as Executive Presbyterian over the 121 parishes of the National Capital Presbytery. With a doctorate from McCormick Theological Seminary, she had served seven years in parish pastorates before starting her 18-year phase as a presbytery officer in Detroit and D.C. When our search began, she hadn’t quite decided to return to parish ministry, but by the time we reignited our search, Teri had made up her mind and answered our posting. She knew about Northminster through friend and counterpart Jill Hudson; had visited



For the Kenya mission trip, Teri Thomas led our delegation and coordinated activities with our local Umoja hosts.

Indianapolis (although not Northminster); and was a loyal customer of the Marigold clothing shop.

Why leave presbytery leadership? In part, she wanted to see if her ideas “would really work” in parish ministry. But more than that, she “wanted to preach to the same congregation every Sunday” and was looking for a relationship that was “bigger than preaching, a connection that lasts.” Those considerations intensified when she received a breast-cancer diagnosis.

Once the committee interviewed her in August 2001, they didn’t take long to decide. But they had to wait for her to lead a dozen D.C. pastors to Jordan, as guests of the government. That delay lengthened as the delegation returned by way of Shannon, Ireland. On September 11, 2001.

When Teri made it back to the U.S., the hiring process accelerated, and Northminster installed her as senior pastor in January 2002. The congregation overwhelmingly approved

her call, with only two dissenting voters—one of whom, years later, summoned her to his hospital room to apologize.

From the outset, Teri inspired us with her preaching—intelligent and spiritual, provocative and colorful. She sensed that, even five years after the Mathias tragedy, we still suffered from some “corporate communal

“Around 2005, in the Peyton Manning era, Teri was doing a wonderful Children’s Moment on Jesus being baptized in the river by John the Baptist. Teri is dramatically acting it out, and when she raises her arms, as John did, with the dove descending on Jesus, she said, ‘And John the Baptist said to Jesus ...’ and a child knowingly responded, ‘Touchdown!’ And the crowd went wild!”
—Jennifer Dzwonar



depression” and “needed to laugh and have some fun,” a task she relished. The PC(USA) moderator called her the most playful pastor in the denomination, and it showed. “I’ve gone to too many boring church services,” Teri said. “We can’t afford to bore people.” As she frequently breached the chancel-sanctuary boundary with an interactive style, the congregation became co-presenters of worship and occasionally felt the splash of baptism water or soft fall of confetti. And grinned at the jangle of the Joyful Noise Pail.

Chances are we’ll remember how she baptized babies, letting them splash in the baptismal font, then carrying them up the center aisle for introductions. And the way she delivered the benediction, gently raising her arms and turning slowly to bless the choir behind her as well as the congregation in front.

We’ll remember how she emphasized Easter. During Lent, she discouraged

meetings, challenged elders to tell their own faith stories, added drive-through blessings on Ash Wednesday, and introduced darkness and drama to Good Friday’s Tenebrae services—all as a lead-up to the joyful hallelujahs of Easter Sunday. And between worship services, she was a strong leader, often reallocating meeting time away from routine business and toward religious study.

Looking back, she took satisfaction in shepherding the Gathering Place and Columbarium projects and in leading the Kenya mission trip. She fondly remembered her 50th birthday surprise, as we waived fans with her photo and a “Happy Birthday From Your Biggest Fans.”

After more than 18 years in our pulpit—the longest of any senior pastor during our first 75 years—Teri left us with these words. “I’ve loved this church from Day One. There’s no way I can ever forget you. You are part of me.”



Our longest-serving head pastor, Teri Thomas took special joy from baptizing the young and introducing them to the congregation.

2006

- ▶ After a year-long discernment process, the Session approves 10 recommendations for facility upgrades and appoints a building committee.
- ▶ ChristCare Groups begin, with several small circles of care to support members, offer Bible study, and do mission work.



- ▶ The Presbyterian Women sponsor an extravaganza featuring Penny Sisto and her spiritual quilts; Northminster commissions the Jesus-with-the-Children quilt visited each Sunday by Children’s Church kids.
- ▶ Clothe-a-Child moves from Lafayette Square to the Castleton Square Sears.

- ▶ The church van is replaced by a larger and safer church bus.
- ▶ Northminster begins an annual tradition by sending a delegation to the Montreat Conference on Worship and Music.



2007

- ▶ At a Super Bowl party hosted by Pat and Bill Freije, the Two-by-Twos watch the Indianapolis Colts defeat the Chicago Bears in Super Bowl XLI.
- ▶ In a ministry initiative inspired by Joyce Mallette, the first group of prayer shawls—knitted/crocheted by members for the ill or grieving—are blessed.

The Hospitality Radical



In roles from Christian Ed director through associate pastor, Ruth Moore has put her welcoming instincts and science-teacher skills to great use with young and old.

It's hard to tell the story of Northminster's past 25 years without saying "Ruth Moore" a lot. She hasn't played the organ or directed the choir, but she's been most everything else during that period—member, elder, Christian education director (including at the time of the Mathias tragedy), seminary intern (starting on September 11, 2001), and associate pastor (including for the COVID-19 pandemic).

Originally from the Philadelphia area, Ruth came this way to attend DePauw, met and married a Wabash guy, spent some years with husband Mark in D.C., then headed back home again (for him) to Indiana. Shortly after she signed on as Northminster's Christian education director, she and Mark joined the church and, in due course, added

children Hadley, John, and Emma to our membership rolls.

Ruth has spent much of her pastor career urging us to look outward, both with our hospitality ministry and our mission efforts. A believer in a culture of "radical hospitality," she led the development of our new Host program and other ways to welcome visitors and presided over new member classes. As part of her mission drive, she spearheaded adoption of our annual Day of Caring and helped build our partnership with the Principe de Paz Church in Mexico, personally joining six of those mission trips to Mexico.

Her other favorite times have included weeks "worshipping, taking classes, and sitting out on the porch at night drinking beer with



Ruth has led an array of programs, including women's weekly Bible study, age-banded groups for home-based fellowship, and many mission and hospitality initiatives.

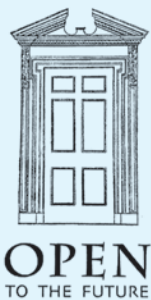
all the Montreat Worship Conference folks." But her most cherished memories have been the weddings and funerals, those "holy moments" she spent with people "as they begin a life together and then as they move into their next life with God."

Some of us will remember particular teaching moments in the chancel, like that Time with Children when the former science major dramatized the "waiting" aspect of Advent. She fired up a cigarette lighter, held it under a spoon holding a popcorn kernel and a bit of oil, and waited. And waited. And chuckled a little nervously. Finally, one white puffball exploded from the spoon, the kids yelled, and the adults breathed again. Lighting a fire, applying necessary lubricant, enjoying the humor, and waiting (sometimes) patiently to make things happen—a classic Ruth Moore moment. ☺



2008

- ▶ Northminster holds a May groundbreaking service to start the building project.
- ▶ Northminster signs The Indianapolis Covenant to begin its participation in the Bread for the World, a multi-church effort to attack hunger.



Still Making a Joyful Noise

Our Presbyterian tradition values music as prayer and praise to God. Chances are that the first few bars of your favorite hymn will bring a flood of emotion. The strains of hymns and anthems, the sound of the organ, the ringing of the bells, and the brass at Easter all have the power to transform. Those who have led Northminster over the years have understood that transformative power, and the congregation has wholeheartedly supported it.

At the start of our third quarter-century, Betty Bergin White was serving as chancel choir director, and she had the task of leading the choir during the funeral service for pastor Fred Mathias and his wife, Clea. Betty's unique style of vocal training prepared the choir for the next turning point in our music program. In the summer of 2000, we hired our first full-time Director of Music Ministries, reinforcing our commitment to a strong music program. What drew John Wright to Northminster was a vital church with an



Director of Music Ministry, John Wright.

outreach component, as well as a congregation proud of its music program. Since then, our facilities have become more accommodating to the program, and we have attracted quality singers and engendered a varied



For special occasions, the Chancel Choir is often joined by guest instrumentalists, including an orchestra.

music program from Bach to Swahili. We have synchronized liturgy and music, and the congregation has enjoyed varying musical styles sung by voices from the youngest to the more mature.

Although staying strong throughout its history, Northminster's music program has not remained stagnant. As one member put it, "the variety of music we offer speaks to our openness as a congregation. Music from different countries and cultures emphasizes our inclusiveness and tendency to look outward... and serve the world." Our Sound and Spirit series also speaks to that inclusiveness and attention to the larger world.

Through the years, Northminster Presbyterian Church has intentionally used music to make a difference—to influence the spiritual lives of all. And the congregation has responded with tremendous support

by providing gifts of new pianos, memorial anthems, Sound and Spirit programs, hymn books, handbells, and the recent support of the new pipe organ.

The music program continues to evolve. But it has not given in to trends. Instead, Northminster has infused the traditional with all genres of music, providing a venue in which people can be transformed. The heart of worship for Northminster has always been the sound of word and music. In short, we know how to make a joyful noise to the Lord!

So what will the 100th-year history say about our music program? In John Wright's vision, it will say that we have an artistically beautiful and acoustically sound organ, a vibrant choir ministry of all ages, greater outreach from our music ministry, and perhaps some surprises that we'll simply have to stick around to see. ☺



2007
CONTINUED

- ▶ The church conducts "Open to the Future," a capital campaign chaired by Susie Koriath and Jerry Gray to fund the upcoming parking/building project, as well as mission projects for Camp Pyoca, the Principe de Paz Church, Habitat for Humanity, and Joy's House; pledges exceed \$2.6 million, with 10 percent for the mission projects.

Receiving the Children

But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great.” —Luke 9:47-48

At Northminster, we’ve been long-time practitioners of this verse from Luke. Over the past 25 years, some formats have changed, but serving the children in Jesus’ name has remained a staple of the church.



Sunday School came first (sometimes happening during, and sometimes between, worship services), and we fondly remember the kids trooping upstairs with their doughnuts and lemonade and spending time doing crafts (lots of popsicle sticks, toilet paper rolls, and cotton balls), reading Bible stories, and asking the big theological questions:

“What’s that bump on the top of Mount Tabor, Mrs. Bulloff?”
“Does the devil live down below the street? I saw steam rising up...”
“Is the Holy Ghost a nice ghost?”

A highlight of a Sunday School “career” came when each third-grader received a Bible, thanks to the Merriman family.

Children’s Church evolved to let kids join adult worship through Time with Children, before leaving for a more relaxed worship style (with a much lower average age). A big draw: getting to light the candles! The age-adjusted rituals helped children understand our worship traditions: memorizing the Lord’s Prayer, taking communion, reading scripture, singing and praying together, and sometimes playing Bible Wheel of Fortune. And the 10:00 hour has seen a variety of activities, including WAMM (worship, arts, music, music), hands-on mission projects, worship preparation, games, and childcare.



Vacation Bible School brought parades, nightly newspapers, Jonah and the really big fish, Holy Moses and flying frogs, Jesus turning the world upside-down, water stories, the Jordan River and electrified fish, Joseph and his brothers, a volcano, pyramids,



Noah’s ark, fiery furnaces, miracles, creepy Bible stories with bones and dancing skeletons, parking lot games, dramatic productions of storytelling, snacks, music, dancing, and hundreds of volunteers.

Youth Group gave middle- and high-schoolers a place to grow spiritually and develop friends and mentors to share their joys, angst, questions, and interests. In addition to games, pizza, and “God songs,” serious spiritual growth happened, with



time for study topics (like dating and stress), scripture, sharing, and prayer. To give youth a “sacred space” of their own, the 2009 remodeling project included a bright new youth room, outfitted with comfy chairs, a foosball table, and other teenager stuff.

Confirmation continued as a highlight for middle-school kids (aged 13-ish)—a special time to explore what they believe and their relationship with God. Confirmands attended weekly meetings, worked through specific “assignments,” and developed relationships with adult mentors who shared faith experiences and encouragement. And the confirmation closed with a weekend retreat—for more than a dozen years at “Graysland,” Jerry and Sally Gray’s place on Lake Monroe.

“It’s interesting seeing other parts of the world and how other people interact. There are small cultural differences everywhere, and it makes you think.”
—Elizabeth Brase

Youth Outings included mission trips to Mexico, New Orleans, New Mexico, and Denver, providing valuable opportunities to serve others and experience their cultures. Youth groups also attended Massanetta, Montreat, and Youth Triennium conferences, meeting youth nationwide and participating in worship, workshops, music, and fellowship.



And locally, they ran mission projects like Super Bowl of Caring, raising several hundred dollars each year to fight local food insecurity. They also went canoeing, creeking, and bike riding and had outings to theme parks, the Indiana State Fair, St. Louis, Holiday World, and more. Those experiences were often multi-generational—one “youth trip” included an 80-year-old Alex Rearick!

The costs of travel led to Italian Night, an annual Italian feast in Calvin Hall, replete with renowned kitchen staff, Italian décor and entertainment, the best-dressed wait staff, kid activities, and live and silent auctions.

Children’s Choirs gave our children a chance to develop their musical talents and to enrich our worship, bringing joy with their voices in the Celebration Choir (K–2nd grade), Peace Choir (3rd–5th), or Bel Canto (6th–8th).



And so much more, including this sampling:

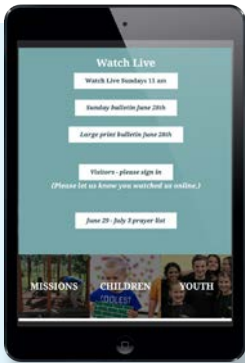
- Trunk or Treat—for our kids AND the community’s, as we decorated ourselves and our cars in Halloween garb and handed out treats.
- Time with Children—as pastors revealed Christ to the kids (and to adults through a kid’s lens), heralded by coins hitting the Joyful Noise Pail.



- The Heifer Project—with children selecting and buying heifers, chickens, and the like to feed global families in need—a project of long-time church-school leader Joe Komenda.
- Wednesday Night Fellowship—dinner and activities for choir families and all others looking for an enjoyable evening of togetherness.
- Baptism Keepsakes—Bibles (from Jackie Schmidt in memory of Marvin and Ann), comfort blankets, and cross-stitch banners (thanks to Joyce Mallette and the Banner Team).

2010

- ▶ PC(USA)’s General Assembly votes, and a majority of presbyteries agree, to remove restrictions against ordaining practicing homosexuals.
- ▶ Live video/audio streaming of Sunday services begins.



- ▶ “The Future Is Now” capital campaign, chaired by Donna Schmah and Andy Longo, raises \$1.2 million to pay down building project debt and dedicate 10 percent for special mission projects.

2011

- ▶ With proceeds from the “The Future Is Now” campaign, Northminster begins special contributions to Dayspring Center, Habitat for Humanity, School 55, PC(USA)’s Disaster Assistance, and the Interfaith Hunger Initiative.

2012

- ▶ Northminster uses a special bequest to upgrade its social media outreach and experiment with the WAMM (Worship through Arts, Mission, and Music) program.



Out of (Indy and Into) Africa



Early in the Kenya trip, our Northminster delegation split up into small groups to visit the homes of orphaned children. For one group's first home visit, three of us followed our Umoja guides through dry, green sorghum fields to the home of a grandmother and several grandchildren. As we walked, the guides explained that the grandmother's four sons, the fathers of her grandchildren, had all died of AIDS. The home we reached was a one-room, dried-mud structure with a corrugated metal roof, one door, no windows, and a low earthen oven in one corner. We talked, some in English and some through an interpreter, and left clothing, soap, and bags of rice and sugar.

Not all the homes or all the stories were quite the same, of course. But every visit

testified to the need for the Umoja Project.

The Umoja Project is a joint effort of over a dozen multi-faith congregations in Indianapolis and about three dozen congregations in the Chulaimbo area of western Kenya, near Lake Victoria and the home of Barack Obama's grandmother. Umoja helps feed and teach orphans, providing corn and



beans and the main costs of their school lunches—often the only nutritious meals of their day—for more than 3,000 students in 19 primary schools, as well as uniforms, health and other basic necessities, and mentoring programs. It also helps over 100 high-achieving high school students.



Teri Thomas helps lead a service in Chulaimbo, Kenya as part of The Umoja Project effort in 2013.

In 2013, Northminster became the first Indianapolis congregation to send its own delegation to Chulaimbo. Led by Teri Thomas, the travelers were Abby Auer; Mary, Gabe, and Will Boris; Ian Clarke; Nancy Flamme; Carol Frohlich; Jerry Gray; Grace Gresham; Debbie Grush; Kate and Emily Keesling; Katie Hart; Andy Longo; John and Anne Purcell; Mike Shannon; Jack Wineman; and John Wright. Other Northminster members made 30 dozen articles of clothing (shorts and dresses) to send along, contributed to scholarships for a few travelers, helped mount an art auction to defray trip costs, and gave added energy in every way.



Travelers helped build small cow barns that allow schools to keep dairy cows.

Why go? In part to lend a hand—on this trip to help build small cow barns (“mangers”) at three schools, so they could keep dairy cows to provide milk for students and raise supplemental sale revenue. But mostly we went to build understanding and become better witnesses.

We joined in a variety of church services (always longer than Northminster's one-hour version), visited schools, attended programs, and discussed progress with older students and local leaders. We stayed at a nun-operated hostel, took morning and evening meals there, sang songs, and shared morning devotions and evening reflections on God's presence during the day. And we managed to fit in an evening boat ride among the hippos on Lake Victoria, as well as a day and a half at a wildlife preserve.

The travelers brought home memories that will last lifetimes, including these:

- Of Kate Keesling and Will Boris in a big circle of little kids, teaching them to do the Hokey Pokey.
- Of Kenyan kids squealing as Gabe Boris walked around on his hands.
- Of Carol Frohlich with local grandmothers,



Our group tried to keep up with local Kenyan dancers; young Chulaimbo girls, unaccustomed to female clergy, eagerly engaged with Pastor Teri.

finding ways to share family experiences across language and cultural divides.

- Of dozens of young girls gathered around a *woman* pastor, asking Teri about America and explaining the special challenges for girls in western Kenya.

Kenya 2013 was a highlight of Northminster's Umoja experience, but not the finale. We've continued to provide leadership and financial support, and the second Northminster delegation is gearing up for another Kenya trip, perhaps in 2021. ♦

Kate Keesling and Will Boris teach school children the Hokey Pokey.

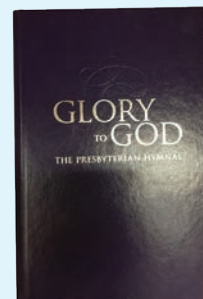


2013



- ▶ Teri Thomas leads a 20-person Northminster mission trip to western Kenya.

- ▶ Northminster deploys the new “Glory to God” hymnal; thanks to John Wright's involvement with PC(USA) music leadership, Northminster had been one of 25 churches to test drive new hymns.



2014

- ▶ To help pay building-project debt, the Foundation writes off property-acquisition loans and temporarily increases its annual church support.

- ▶ In August, Northminster joins four other churches to sponsor Back-to-School Extravaganza to help needy Washington Township students; Northminster operates the “clothing store,” gathering, cleaning, and distributing used clothing (from school lost-and-found collections) and new jeans.



- ▶ PC(USA) votes to allow churches to marry same-sex couples; the Northminster Session approves using church facilities to marry any couple with a valid Indiana marriage license and a pastor's approval.

Long Live the King

Mozart called the pipe organ “the king of instruments,” and over the years, Northminster has been blessed to house such royalty.

In the earliest days, our worship music came from a used piano, followed in 1947 by a pump-type organ with electric blower in the then-sanctuary (now Lindquist Chapel). When the current sanctuary came on line in 1957, we added a Hammond electric organ, but in 1962 moved it to the chapel to make way for a Reuter pipe organ. (The Hammond remained in its custom-built chapel loft until 2011, when the faithful musical servant departed in pieces.)

To make the Reuter fit the chancel, it was installed with pipes facing each other, not a position for optimal sound. It was refurbished and expanded in 1991 and



The Reuter pipe organ (above) served Northminster since 1962. Then, on March 1, 2020, more than 100 members helped unload parts for the new Fisk Opus 154 organ.

upgraded further in the early 2000s. But of late, our old and trusty Reuter was requiring expensive modifications to survive, and in 2011, the Session appointed a task force to study what to do about it.

Over the next eight years, three iterations of the task force studied the options, made twenty visits to hear other organs, recommended replacement, and narrowed the list to three possible builders, among them C.B. Fisk. A 2016 capital campaign raised a substantial amount, but not enough to cover purchasing and fitting a new organ into our chancel, so the project went on hold. Two years later, task force member Mike Boris got an unexpected call from Fisk. A church in California had canceled its order for an organ that Fisk had already blocked out time to build. Fisk offered us an opportunity to take the California church’s place

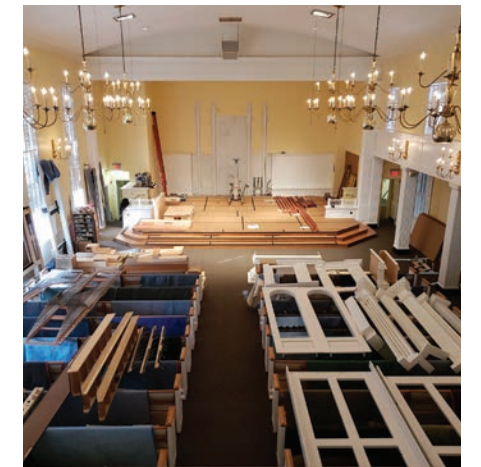


“Northminster has given Jen and me the opportunity to work with pre- and elementary school kids (through Children’s Church) who are now looking at colleges. It was neat for me to see some of those kids getting pipe organ parts off the Fisk truck.”
—Russell Wareham

and purchase, at a substantial discount, “an exceptional piece of artistry, configurable to our exact specifications, with excellent value [and] custom-built for Northminster.” With that, several contributors came forward to complete the necessary funding.

On March 1, 2020, adopting a Fisk tradition, over 100 of our members stayed after Sunday service to help unload the 1900+ pipes and other fittings of our new organ. Over the next few days, Fisk personnel assembled the instrument in the chancel and prepared to finish the “voicing” process (which adjusts each pipe for tone and volume). By then, however, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived and required a temporary pause. When that lifts and the voicing is complete, the organ will be officially ready for primetime. Fortunately, Marko Petricic, the first organist to play the Opus 154, has let us hear its beauty during our social-distancing online worship.

Our own ‘king of instruments’ has supported a rich musical legacy on Sundays and other holy days, at weddings and funerals, and at concerts and recitals—demonstrating its evangelical impact. Now we can expect enriching musical experiences to continue at Northminster well beyond our 75th year. Stay tuned.✦



Our new, custom-built organ gets nestled into the redesigned chancel.

2015

- ▶ With the Dayspring Center, Northminster hosts a role-playing experience, “Homelessness is Just a Paycheck Away,” to demonstrate the financial causes and effects of homelessness.

- ▶ Northminster dedicates the Columbarium, our urban version of the country churchyard, including a Celtic cross in David McDonald’s memory (from wife Carol) and a bench in Ron Smith’s name (from wife Jinnie and family)—a project overseen by Linda Furuness, Jerry Gray, Bob Gudgel, and Tom Stayton.



- ▶ Northminster begins participating in a Gleaners Food Bank operation at Second Presbyterian.



2016

- ▶ For the church’s first Day of Caring, members meet for a brief Sunday service, then fan out for mission projects in the community, including Gleaners, Dayspring Center, Julian Center, and Exodus Refugee Immigration.



- ▶ The “Abundant Joy” capital campaign, chaired by Cheryl and John Plunkett and Jennifer Dzwonar, raises \$1.3 million to reduce existing debt and create new organ and mission funds.
- ▶ With a gift from the Art and Barb Angotti family, the church sacristy receives a major upgrade.



Love in the Time of COVID (and before)

Before Ron Smith’s time when we turned “committees” into “teams,” the Mission Team was known as Social Education and Action. While names don’t usually matter that much, our members have always applied those name elements in selecting mission projects: will this educate our congregation about needs, will it engage us, will our involvement make a difference, and will it call us to action?



Twenty-five years ago, Lynne Tobin and Mitra Khazai told the committee about a program to house temporarily homeless families inside our church. They had already attended informational meetings of the Interfaith Hospitality Network (now a program of Family Promise), and they made such a thorough report that we sent them right back to IHN with a “we’re in” message. The IHN board was somewhat shocked that we could make a decision without more “committee meetings.” Apparently Presbyterians are known for that! As large and involved as the project was and continues to be, IHN suits us.

Another mission staple, Clothe-a-Child has seemingly involved most everyone in the congregation (including three generations of Durretts) for God-only-knows how long. In the early days, we shopped at Sears and lunched at MCL with as many as 100 children from 6-17 years old. More recently we’ve shopped at Target with around 80 children from our IPS School #55 partnership, and our own house has become the food and entertainment center.

The newer Back-to-School Extravaganza also ticks all the boxes for social education and action, as we’ve applied our funds and our labor in assembling, laundering, and distributing new and used clothing to help 1300 needy children prepare for school. Extravaganza has involved collaboration with other congregations, an important technique that we’ve employed in other ventures, including The House (youth coffee house), Global Interfaith Partnership, Habitat for Humanity builds, Family Promise, and the Gleaners Food Bank.

Homelessness, hunger, domestic strife, and poverty have turned our church into a



collection center at times. We’ve assembled school materials, personal hygiene products, even disaster kits. And written letters to veterans and to Congress to lobby for world hunger relief. And we’ve joined our church school kids in supporting the Heifer Project, to help the world’s hungry feed themselves.

During the past 25 years, Northminster has joined adult and youth hands on major mission endeavors in Mexico and Kenya and domestically. The mission trips have gone beyond the hard and hot work of building a church and cow sheds, usually including worship, bible schools, and tons of singing and dancing. They have forged lasting friendships with the served communities and within our own multigenerational delegations. While we sewed clothes and shipped school supplies, we also sent the gifts of our people.



Since 1995, we’ve welcomed families from Bosnia, Eritrea, and the Republic of the Congo. Their stories of lives inside refugee camps touched our hearts and set us to action helping them start a better life. We set up apartments and introduced them to new systems—school, healthcare, employment, insurance, and so much paperwork. One family welcomed a new son within the first year. Susie Koriath was so instrumental in lives of the Wubes, our Eritrean family, that she was prepared to be the birth coach! The child was named Merhowe, Eritrean for Hope.

We have had four capital campaigns in the past 25 years, and each one has given at least 10 percent of its proceeds to mission projects. Among them were the Principe de



Paz church in Mexico, Joy’s House in Broad Ripple, a special build for Habitat, and the Umoja Project. During a devastating spate of hurricanes, we tapped campaign funds for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, a program of the greater church that we knew and trusted. PDA is still on the ground in many devastated locations, worldwide.

Some years ago, the Dayspring Center developed a “board game” called A Paycheck Away, based on true stories from inside the Center. Hosted by Steve and Kaitlyn Boller, the exercise showed us how a literal toss of the dice or a panicked decision could put families on the street. By learning from, and acting to support, Dayspring, we’ve helped families struggling with homelessness; through the Craine House, families with incarcerated mothers; through the Julian Center, families facing domestic abuse; and others in need through many mission partners.

This spring, we were feeling down ourselves, burdened by budget problems and a senior pastor search. Then COVID-19 crept its way across the world, isolating us, frightening us, and obstructing us from the work we wanted to do. The pandemic landed at the church doorstep and found a locked



door. Perhaps it has made us feel closer to those we served. Perhaps we better understand the family, food, and financial insecurities that we’ve long worked to relieve.

Even amidst large-event cancellations and the new universe of Zoom, the church has continued to offer help. We have reached out to every single member of the congregation by phone and cards. We already knew how to do meal trains, and we do them better. Some sew colorful face masks, along with clothes for Kenya. Others don masks and gloves while delivering meals, working in food banks, and shopping for neighbors. Others have used their expertise in 3D imaging to make PPE equipment for health care workers. Never before have our Bread for the World letters to Congress felt more impassioned.

Ironically, we know what to do in a time of pandemic. We do more.◀

2017

► The Shelby Next software application goes live, giving members streamlined computer and cell phone techniques for making and tracking contributions, as well as access to other members’ contact information and communication shortcuts.



► Debbie Bulloff retires after 12 years as director of Christian education, and Julie Shannon resigns after 17 years as youth director; their positions are combined, and some part-time positions eliminated, to make budgets balance.

2018

► Northminster sponsors the Lutumika family, a refugee family from Burundi by way of the Congo; Connie Coleman leads church volunteers in transitioning the Lutumikas to Indianapolis.



► After Sears closes its Castleton store, Clothe-a-Child relocates to the Glendale Target, with pizza and social activities at Northminster.

2019

► Northminster contracts with C.B. Fisk to purchase a new pipe organ, and construction begins to remove the side walls separating the chancel from the sanctuary; worship services relocate temporarily to Calvin Hall.



A Legacy of Faith

The call of the future floated soft on the wind inviting all those who heard it to respond by joining their hearts as a community of faith with God’s love the cement in their bond.

*“Seek all who are searching for answers.
Serve those who need to feel caring hands.
Embrace the past by cherishing its story
and the future where opportunity stands.”*

One by one, they came forward and answered by starting a church they would carefully grow. Did they know they were writing the history of the Northminster that we presently know?

How would they view our circle of faith today - those resolute souls who started it all? Would they be proud to find it’s stepping up still and sharing with others the hope in God’s call?

*“Seek all who are searching for forgiveness.
Serve them by showing God’s grace in their lives.
Embrace the dedication of souls of the past
and the challenges on which the future thrives.”*

For seventy-five years, the story’s been written (some of the pages now yellowed and torn) of all those who have loved the same God since the idea of Northminster was born

When future generations read all about us, will they cherish the faithful community they see? Will they be inspired to step up as children of God? Will their commitment be our own legacy?

*“Seek all who search for light in the darkness.
Serve God by not letting them walk all alone
Embrace the past for the lessons it teaches
and the future where possibilities are grown.”*

Terri Hubbard

For Northminster Presbyterian Church’s 75th Anniversary — 2020



2020

► The new pipe organ arrives by truck as unassembled components; after worship, members carry the pipes and other components into the sanctuary.



► In mid-March, with COVID-19 taking hold, Northminster cancels on-site activities, including Teri Thomas’s retirement reception; from an empty Calvin Hall, Teri preaches her final Northminster sermon by streaming video and retires after more than 18 years in the pulpit.

► Northminster locks down for months, conducting virtual worship services online and other activities, including its interim pastor search, by Zoom and similar apps.



Ministry and Program Staff

1995-2020

Senior Pastors

Fred Mathias
Ron Smith (transitional)
Teri Thomas

Associate Pastors

Don Durrett
Donna Wells
Nancy Howard (interim)
John Stevens (interim)
Ruth Chadwick Moore
Larry Moslener

Senior Ministry

Damon and Lucille Auble
Barb Stayton
Jane Eyler
Carol Campbell
Denise Harrington

Parish Associates

Jerry Weber
Don Durrett
Don MacPherson
Carol McDonald
Barbara Sloop

Seminary Interns

Tom Harrison
Ruth Chadwick Moore
Julie Osborne
Andrea Martin
Ann Noland
Marland Pittman

Music Directors

Betty Bergin White
John Wright

Organists

David Graf
Kristin Jones
Martin Ellis
Eric Dombrowski
Marko Petricic

Youth Directors

Mary Anne Martin
Kimberly Koczan
Neil Myer
Julie Shannon
Jacob Mann
Maureen Wilson
Marland Pittman (interim)

Christian Education Directors

Ruth Chadwick Moore
Jolien Catlan
Lori Boone
Debbie Bulloff
Maureen Wilson
Melissa Hopkins (interim)

Business Administrators

Nancy Armstrong
Arlene Schmaltz
Jim Mann
Lori Schlabach

Stephen Ministry Leaders

(effective date)
Betty Bowers (2001)
Nancy Jarrell (2001)
Larry Moslener (2003)
Jody Baumgardt (2003)
Ann Dunipace (2004)
Carol Campbell (2007)
John Reed (2016)
Tony Dzwonar (2017)

75th Anniversary Celebration Committee:

Sally Gray and Barb Stayton (co-chairs)
Heather Banks
Dolly Craft
Susan Crook
Debbie Stuart Everett
Carol Frohlich
Cheri Gudgel
Sarah Hittle
Cheryl Jacklin
Nancy Hill
Emily Johnson
Bill Lord
Cathy Lord

Before We Go...

“Five years ago, when a white supremacist killed nine members of an AME church in Charleston, South Carolina, I can still recall the breaking news on CNN. I knew exactly where the church was, and the event touched me even more as a former AME church member. I could not fathom how a person could have so much hate in their heart to perform such a criminal act. And my in-laws lived in Charleston, a beautiful and historic city, but I struggled with the disparity there. The Sunday after the shooting, the Northminster congregation sang ‘We Shall Overcome’ at the end of the worship service. I left the sanctuary with tears in my eyes, grateful to John Wright, the choir, and the love of our membership to sing that song on what’s typically called the most segregated day of the week.”
—Roz Lancaster

“Back in the summer of 2002, I had a one-year-old baby at home, but I went along with my sister to Mexico, with a small group of Northminster members. While on that trip, I thought the youth of NPC need to do this—they must have this experience. That was the birth of the youth participation in the Mexico mission trips (from 2004–2010) to our Partner Church, Principe de Paz, and the continuation of lifelong connections with our Mexican friends. On the most recent visit here by Pastor Neri and his wife Leydy this past summer, when I was still in the thick of recovery from my accident, Neri prayed over me in Spanish. I felt the healing power of God showering over me and overcoming the boundaries of language and culture and distance.”
—Julie Shannon

“When my mother died, Pastor Ruth visited and gifted me with a prayer shawl. I’ve wrapped myself in that shawl many times over the years: In my grief for my mother and years later as I grieved for my aunt; when I’ve prayed when faced with difficult decisions and challenges; when I’ve danced with joy (no observers); when I was cold; and when I’ve needed comfort and the knowledge that I am part of a larger family of believers and people who care.”
—Lynne Tobin

“Every year in April the choir does a “blowout” day where the choirs all perform together. The parents never know what the kids are singing. On April 23, 2017, the choirs sang ‘I Believe in the Sun,’ complete with some surprise solos. It was one of the most beautiful performances I have seen at our church (which is a very high bar). I remember all of the moms sitting, overcome with emotion, tears streaming—at the beauty of the song and the magnificent way John had the kids and adults sing it together. To this day, watching the video takes my breath away.”
—Anne Ricchiuto



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Proclaim is a new quarterly publication of Northminster Presbyterian Church celebrating the stories, people and work of our church. It features more human interest than timely information. Let us all *Proclaim* the good news! Please send interesting story ideas and photos to sglant@northminster-indy.org. We cannot guarantee publication of all submissions, but we appreciate recommendations. Thank you for reading and for all you do to support Northminster.

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