

PROCLAIM

A publication of Northminster Presbyterian Church

Winter 2020



A Welcome In, A Way Out

Trapped in what seemed like an endless loop of homelessness, the young mother and her three children needed a WAY OUT. The Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) provided just that, with a WELCOME IN.

For a while, the family had lived in subsidized housing, with the two older kids in school, the youngest in daycare, and mom looking for work. And then an apparent breakthrough—mom found a job. But paradoxically, the good news brought along a lot of the bad, as her rent subsidy automatically dropped (by one-third of her wages), and her landlord delayed three months before billing her for the difference. Not having enough cash left to cover three months of rent payments, the family was evicted. As a foster child herself, mom had little extended family support to call on, so she and the three kids began a grueling nine months of short-term stay-overs with a series of friends.

Then things got worse. With no permanent address, mom missed some key government mailings and lost subsidized childcare for her youngest. And by taking the extra time to get the older children to and from school on city buses, she lost the job that had started the cascade of events.

That's when she tried IHN, a temporary housing program of Family Promise and its faith-based congregations.

Faced with a recent eviction on her record, eviction-related debt (including back rent and court costs and fees), and no job, she couldn't find a willing landlord. She fell into a gap in the government-funded "continuum

of care." And she still had three children to care for, with no apparent way out of the homelessness maze.

That's when she tried IHN, a temporary housing program of Family Promise and its faith-based congregations (see "How IHN Works"). The Family Promise staff and IHN congregations (see "What Northminster does") slotted the family into the week-to-week room-and-board rotation, provided pajamas and playgrounds for the kids, and helped mom work through some other critical challenges. With IHN guidance and backing, she found a public preschool for her youngest, as well as a new job. She also found a landlord willing to take a chance



on her, primarily because, in the landlord's words, "Family Promise has had the back of almost every tenant you've sent to us."

Now mom has to remind the kids not to jump on their beds—the first beds of their own they've had in a year.

They've found their WAY OUT.



The Interfaith Hospitality Network, with 35 Indianapolis congregations (including Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Hindu faith communities) and some 1500 volunteers, has been hosting temporarily homeless families for 25 years. For a week at a time on a rotating basis, each congregation provides overnight accommodations, meals, and evening activities on-site for four families. Each weekday, the congregation also transports their guests to IHN's central facility, where family members can shower, dress, and head out to daycare, schools, workplaces, and employment training. Since 2013, IHN has expanded to become Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis, adding the AfterCare program to provide counseling and related services to families transitioning from IHN housing to longer-term residential options. At last count, of the IHN families who had left for regular housing during the prior two years, 88 percent had managed to stay out of the shelter system.



What Northminster Does

You've probably seen the beds rolling in through the Gathering Place on a Sunday. That's the start of an IHN hosting week.

One of the first IHN congregations in Indianapolis (thanks in large part to member Lynne Tobin), Northminster hosts four families for three weeks each year, housing each family in a separate room on the Christian Education Wing's second floor. During those weeks, 90 or so Northminster volunteers do what it takes to provide a welcoming home for the IHN guests, including setting up rooms, preparing and hosting dinners, leading evening activities, staying as overnight hosts, offering breakfast and packable lunch items, driving guests by van to and from IHN Central, cleaning up at week's end, and transporting beds and supplies to the next congregation. Each volunteer shift takes about two to three hours, except for the overnight hosts who spend about 10 hours at the church. Northminster also provides financial support for Family Promise and its IHN and AfterCare programs.

Kathryn and Gabe Goncalves, who now coordinate the Northminster effort, love "watching the residents' children interacting with church kids. There are several church families that come and volunteer and bring the whole family, and it's always really special to watch the kids play together. Kind of a good reminder that kids are kids, no matter what."

Travel Seminar on a Difficult but Important Subject

The first time I recall really struggling personally with an issue of social justice was when I was in high school. I was encouraged to boycott McDonald's. That would be a huge sacrifice for a high schooler. I had to wonder if it was really necessary.

The issue surrounded migrant workers who travel to northwest Ohio every summer and filled the tomato fields. These fields were some that supplied a number of corporations, including McDonald's. The workers were not receiving fair pay or adequate living conditions. I joined the boycott, over the protest of my stomach, but learned very little about the issue.

Over the years, I gradually learned more about the migrant workers who come to our country and the differing opinions on the immigration debates. I developed concern for the people involved but the issue never made it to the top of my social justice list. That is, until our country began separating children from their families and putting babies in cages. I am totally convinced that our current immigration policies are in direct

They conflict with everything I believe about God's love and Christian living.

contradiction to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They conflict with everything I believe about God's love and Christian living.

While my feelings are strong, I realize I do not know enough about the details to be a very effective activist. But God answered my prayers as I read this article on the PCUSA web site.

Dominating the news cycle have been stories of migrant children who have been separated from their parents upon arrival to the US. We are horrified by this policy and know that our immigration system needs major reforms. This travel study seminar aims to help concerned Presbyterians better understand the immigration context we are facing in the US with our Central American brothers and sisters and why they take the

risk of embarking on this dangerous journey north with children in tow. We will also explore other potential and actual consequences of US policies, such as mass deportation, and how that is impacting the lives of the returned migrants, their families, communities and nations.

www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/travel_study/



Let the Celebration Begin

On Sunday, June 24, 1945, a new church was commissioned to be built at the corner of Ralston and Kessler Boulevard. Fast forward to 2020 and join us on Sunday, January 5th at 10:00, as we kickoff our 75th Anniversary celebration in the gathering space. Enjoy cookies made from recipes in the Women of Northminster Cookie Cookbook, take a look at items from the archives, and learn about what to expect from February through June.



We will focus on the ways we Seek God and Community on February 2nd. You will be able to talk with representatives from various groups that offer opportunities for study and Christian fellowship.

March 1st will focus on the ways we serve our church and our mission in our community and around the world. You will also have the opportunity to participate in a service project.

On March 29th, we will Embrace the Past. Don Durrett will be preaching, and there will be a slide show of church history and items on display at 10:00.

75th anniversary
CELEBRATION BRUNCH

Sunday, June 28th
11:30 – 2:00

The Willows
6729 Westfield Blvd. Broad Ripple

OPUS 154 – Northminster’s Musical Legacy

Or: Replacing a Vital Organ

The marvelous pipe organ. “The King of Instruments,” according to Wolfgang A. Mozart. A revered, complex instrument with a one-thousand-year history of use in the Western Church. First invented around 200 B.C., but not used in churches until 900 A.D., the pipe organ is the source of background music for our congregation, including worship services, concerts, celebrations such as weddings and baptisms, and occasions for grieving. The accompaniment to our choirs and a superstar in its own right.

As we prepare to welcome a “joyful noise” with the arrival of our new pipe organ, C.B. Fisk Opus 154, it’s appropriate to trace the steps along a passionate quest that brought us to where we are today. You may know that this journey dates back to 2011. A formal evaluation committee was chartered by the Session to consider the future of the old Reuter organ that was showing signs of extreme wear and tear. What to do once we had drained every last possible note from our faithful friend, which had been installed initially in 1962. (Did you know that the old Reuter organ was not originally designed and built for Northminster? Because our balcony could not support its weight, the organ was installed at the front of the sanctuary and the adjoining spaces.)

The group commissioned two professional evaluations of the existing organ, reviewing the options to repair, refurbish or replace the organ. Estimates for repair alone were extremely high, and based on evaluator recommendations, the team decided to move forward with replacing the organ altogether. Upon communicating



the findings and recommendations to the Session and congregation, a plan was born to purchase a new pipe organ. The process took 7 years and saw three configurations of organ committees.

Current task force members include Mike Boris, Andy Longo, Linda Furuness, Bob Gudgel, David Neitzel, Marko Petričić, Rob Rothrock, Blake Schlabach, John Wright, and Frank Boles, consultant. Dedicated to forging a path ahead, this group has provided regular and transparent updates along the way. They’ve done the heavy lifting on the project, and whenever the Session had to make decisions as part of the process, they endorsed all steps to move forward. “We needed to have vision for the future, and the Session voted to support this project all the way through,” said Mike Boris.

A Decision Was Made...So Where to Start?

The organ task force began its work as any good project manager would – defining the goals and objectives. And because organ builders typically build organs

to suit different needs and styles, it was critical that everyone understand exactly how a new pipe organ could support Northminster’s congregation, community and vision: 1) to support worship with hymn singing, choir anthems, and liturgy, 2) to align services both scripturally and musically, and 3) in response to feedback from new congregational members – the quality of sacred music is consistently given as a top reason people are attracted to Northminster.

The team visited 21 pipe organs throughout Indiana and in Illinois, Kentucky and Ohio. Marko Petričić brought a playlist with him, playing the same list of pieces at each location for comparison purposes. They recorded the sound, took notes, and spoke with local musicians to hear their feedback. But it wasn’t as simple as just selecting the builder they liked best. They had to consider budget, fundraising needs, our space, and potential sanctuary modifications. Navigating all the options before them, the group narrowed down its list to three

preferred organ builders: Dyer Organs, Lively-Fulcher, and C. B. Fisk. They began by speaking with C.B. Fisk, who proposed an initial cost estimate of \$1.1 million. But this wasn’t realistic – while the Abundant Joy Campaign raised an impressive estimated \$500K in pledges for the organ, it would not be enough. With C.B. Fisk unable to accommodate our original wishes with the funding we had, and in understanding the very real costs of purchasing an appropriate pipe organ, the task force realized it might have to return to the drawing board. And there was the issue of space – what if we had

opportunity that had just become available. One of C.B. Fisk’s then-current clients, a church in California, had recently been severely damaged by a mudslide and unfortunately had to cancel its order. Knowing that Northminster was still seeking a solution to our organ dilemma, C.B. Fisk offered us a chance to purchase a slightly smaller organ than we had envisioned, but it was an exceptional piece of artistry, configurable to our exact specifications, with excellent value at a price around \$700K. And best of all, it would be a custom-built organ for Northminster!



to rearrange the chancel and have additional construction to accommodate a new organ?

The road toward progress looked dissonant.

A Turning Point

In August 2018, the situation took an unexpected turn when Mike Boris received a call from Michael Kraft, the new president of C.B. Fisk. Kraft explained about an

organ), the issue of insufficient funding remained, and we needed to find a way to bridge the gap before signing a contract with C.B. Fisk.

The task force sought out additional funders. Several individuals stepped up with large donations, and a significant number of smaller donations – from \$10 to thousands of dollars – also came in, including contributions from non-members. Things were coming together. “It means a lot that, when we asked again, the congregation showed up. This shows the power of our members and their connection to music and the arts here at Northminster,” said Mike Boris.

The time came for the task force to bring in architects, engineers, and construction specialists to determine configuration needs in the chancel area. Some walls would have to be removed, we learned, which added to the cost. Thankfully, additional funds were earmarked by the Session, and the Northminster Presbyterian Church Foundation came through with a donation of \$57K of earnings to help us cross the finish line.

“What we’re purchasing is a piece of art. It’s handmade by American craftsmen and will be a lasting legacy for the church,” said Andy Longo. “It’s really exciting to see how a group of people with an appreciation for music came together in 2011 and stayed with the mission throughout. Wanting to accomplish something big at Northminster, we decided that we needed to do this. A lot of people rallied behind the organ project and got it done.”

Final Pieces in the Fundraising Puzzle

Andy Longo presented the opportunity to the congregation in early 2019 and was met with support and encouragement from our members, from the Session, and from Northminster’s leadership. But even with the sale of the church’s Reuter organ for \$20K to the Catholic Parish of St. Malachy in Brownsburg, Indiana (where it now has a happy new home, replacing an electric

OPUS 154 – Northminster’s Musical Legacy

Or: Replacing a Vital Organ

Great, Manual I	Swell, Manual II	Pedal	Couplers:
Prestant 8’	Violin Diapason 8’	Soubasse 16’	Swell to Great
Spire Flute 8’	Celeste 8’	Octave 8’ (Gt.)	Great to Pedal
Octave 4’	Chimney Flute 8’	Spire Flute 8’ (Gt.)	Swell to Pedal
Fifteenth 2’	Traverse Flute 4’	Trombone 16’	Swell to Pedal 4’
Mixture III-IV	Nasard 2 2/3’	Trumpet 8’ (Gt)	
Trumpet 8’	Gemshorn 2’		Accessories:
	Tierce 1 3/5’		Cymbalstern
	Hautbois 8’		General Tremulant



The New Organ

First of all, bigger isn’t always better. Marko Petričić, Music Associate Director and Organist, provided insight into the process of selecting the right pipe organ for Northminster’s needs. “Far more important is that every pipe is made with an exquisitely beautiful sound that inspires singing, playing of the repertoire, and that the listener is left wanting to hear much more instead of being impatient to leave and do something else. Also, all the stops must make sense in the big picture, and they need to be used in limitless combinations, each one working well in terms of sound, balance, and volume. Every stop on our new organ is made with these principles in mind, and the result is fantastic!”

Placement of a pipe organ also is key, because an organ should “speak” directly to the congregation, not at itself, which was the effect we had with the Reuter organ’s pipes positioned facing each other. And to better reflect the sound, two narrow front walls will come down in order to create a new open chancel concept and make more room, allowing the choir and the organ to be located in the same large space with the congregation.

A pipe organ requires wind from the bellows, which supplies the force of air

through the pipes. The organist controls which pipes are allowed to “speak,” and which remain silent, by using “stops.” These are the knobs found on the “console,” where the organist sits. Each note on the keyboard has a matching pipe, and the length of the pipe determines the pitch of the sound it makes (longer pipes emit lower pitches, for instance). The pipes are grouped together in rows, or “ranks,” according to the particular sound the pipes make. It takes a lot of pipes to achieve the different colors of sound and varying degrees of volume from a pipe organ. And many different types of organ pipes have emerged through history via experimentation and a desire to emulate musical instruments such as the trumpet, oboe, flute, violin, or even the human voice.

Northminster’s new organ “leans toward the German Baroque style, but includes an enclosed, front-to-back Swell division for effective accompaniment functions. The organ is thus eclectic in that it combines a German principal chorus and Schnitger-style reeds on Great and Pedal with French Romantic flues and Hautbois in the Swell.” Opus 154 will have 2 manuals, 3 divisions, 19 stops, 17 independent voices, and 1,063 pipes. With the new features, the organist can achieve a richer, subtler sound and, with a swell box providing a broad

range of dynamics, our choirs can sing very softly and very loudly, adequately supported by the organ the entire time.

Installation Timeline

Northminster’s new organ will be delivered soon, depending on the completion of chancel changes. C.B. Fisk representatives then will be on site to “voice” each of the 1,063 pipes, playing each note separately, adjusting its pitch and tone to meet the requirements of our space. C.B. Fisk will play all keys and stops that admit the air to the pipes, testing the acoustics and the sound projection in the sanctuary.

We expect to begin using the organ in May 2020, with an organ dedication concert scheduled for May. An organ recital will follow in fall 2020.

“The organ will solidify Northminster’s place in the community as a church that supports and practices the arts and Reformed worship, improving congregational singing and adding vibrancy to worship. It will artistically enhance our worship and concert space, and it will be an excellent instrument for teaching, attracting musicians and music lovers alike,” said John Wright, Director of Music Ministries.

About C.B. Fisk, Inc.

Located in Gloucester, Massachusetts, C.B. Fisk endeavors to create instruments of great visual beauty, in harmony with their surrounding architecture, the design conveying the nuance and majesty of the sound for which it was created. A successful pipe organ brings to life the composer’s work and the player’s interpretation of it. C.B. Fisk makes instruments that will inspire players and listeners for generations to come. Their website quotes Albert Schweitzer (1931): “The struggle for the good organ is to [us] a part of the struggle for the truth.”

In November, members of the task force traveled to C.B. Fisk’s workshop, learning more about organ building and attending their open house to view the completed instrument on display. Although they have built organs in Bloomington and Evansville, this is the first C.B. Fisk organ in Indianapolis. It’s an exciting time for Northminster, and we invite everyone to join the musical celebration.

“I am humbled and honored to be a part of this church family that made this happen,” said Rob Rothrock.

For a fascinating, deeper look at the history of the evolution of the pipe organ, visit www.classichistory.net/archives/organ
Opus 154 – Soli Deo Gloria



Sound & Spirit Presents Requiems and Alleluias



***Sunday, March 22
at 4 pm
Northminster Chancel
Choir and orchestra
present
Requiems & Alleluias***



On Sunday, March 22 at 4 pm, Northminster Chancel Choir and orchestra will present a concert, Requiems & Alleluias. This free concert features two Vivaldi motets and Michael Haydn's Requiem.

The younger brother of Franz Joseph Haydn, Michael Haydn (1737-1806) lived and worked in Salzburg for most of his life, employed as the court composer and music director for the Archbishop. He composed music in every genre, devoting his best energies to sacred repertoire, and wrote 38 masses, 6 Te Deums and 3 Requiems. Mozart likely was strongly influenced by Haydn's Requiem when composing his own Requiem a few years later.

Known in music history as the "Red-Headed Priest" (il Prete Rosso), Antonio Vivaldi (1678- 1741) was a violinist virtuoso. He was a teacher and composer for 30 years in Venice at La Pieta, an orphanage for girls from illegitimate births or destitute families. In his two motets for soprano and orchestra, "Nulla in mundo pax sincera" (In all this world there is no honest peace) and "In furore iustissimae irae" (In wrath and most just anger), Vivaldi treats the voice as an instrumental showcase. Singers must sing rapid sixteenth note scalar figures and make large leaps throughout.

Joining us for these vocal calisthenics is soprano Sherazade Panthaki, an exciting singer enjoying international success.

The New York Times states that she mines "deep emotion from the subtle shaping of the lines." The Los Angeles Times praises her "full, luxuriously toned upper range." This season she will sing with the Philharmonic Baroque Orchestra, Bach Collegium Japan, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Boston Early Music Festival, Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and the San Francisco Early Music Festival.

Shorter works in the concert will be George Frederick Handel's well known Zadok the Priest and Eliza Gilkyson's Requiem. Please join us and invite friends and family as well!

It's about the Giving

When I first started working for the Presbyterian Foundation 16 years ago, one of the first definitions of stewardship that I learned was "Stewardship is everything that happens after I say I believe." Stewardship is about every decision I make and every action I take and how my faith informs those decisions and actions. I still like this definition, but recently I have come across a more interactive dimension: the giving nature of stewardship.

A couple of years ago at another conference, the speaker posited that our God is, at the core, a giving God. Every element of our faith is there because it was given by God, shared with us. Giving from God comes before anything else that we receive. Giving comes first. The speaker went on to say that we are acting most like the God whose image we were created in when we are giving.



Christmas is the "season of giving". Of course, this is often referencing the giving of gifts, wrapped and placed under the tree. However, there are so many ways that we give to one another. We give support. We



give our respect. We give our love. We give compliments, advice, care and concern. Sometimes we give space to someone to let them blow off steam or do some thinking and soul searching. We give our time. We give our talents. And we give our money.

And of course, along with the giving comes the receiving. We have all been on the receiving end of the gifts listed above. Most of the time receiving gifts makes us feel good, blessed, happy, fulfilled, affirmed. Receiving is the part of Christmas that young children (and some not-so-young children) look forward to most. However, at some point, we shift to looking forward to being the giver of that special gift that was selected for a special person.

Giving has an impact on our world much like ripples when a stone is dropped in a lake. One gift will start the first ripple and

then it grows, and more gifts are given, and it grows until it flows in all directions and continues to make a visible impact.

***Giving has an impact
on our world much like
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dropped in a lake.***

This year let us contemplate the gifts we have given to others this year and what those gifts have meant to each of us. How have we grown and been fulfilled through the giving, and how has our giving strengthened our relationships, our communities and our world? Talk with kids and grandkids about their giving experiences. Share with others the joys of giving, and look forward to the year ahead and ways that you may give and make a difference.

Christmas, Kids, Clothes—Questions?



What's Clothe-a-Child all about?

It's our opportunity, early each December, to give some help to some kids who need it – to take them clothes shopping, treat them to a pizza lunch, have some fun together, and generally brighten up their, and our, Christmas season.

How many volunteers participate?

About the same as the number of kids. Depending on individual assignments, Northminster members and friends ride the buses, pair off to shop with a child or two, organize the merchandise checkout and delivery process, serve up pizza and drinks, and lead the after-shopping activities.

How many kids?

Around 80, give or take. All from IPS School 55, located at 1349 East 54th Street.

How much do we spend?

About \$150 per child.



What do we buy?

Primarily winter coats, shoes/boots, pants/skirts, shirts/blouses, sweaters/sweatshirts, underwear, socks, and gloves—all based on parent request forms that include sizes and preferences.

How long have we been doing this?

A half century or so. Nobody knows for sure.

Why do we keep doing it?

To keep warming some young bodies. And some hearts, including our own.

Where does all this happen?

Our sites have shifted over the years to keep up with changing retail patterns. Currently we shop at the Glendale Target and reconvene for food and activities in our own Calvin Hall.



Please plan to join us in December 2020!

Contact Ruth Moore, Associate Pastor
ruthcmoore@northminster-indy.org or
 (317) 251-9489, ext. 14
 for more information.



Top Ten Gripes of a Youth Pastor

10. Most of the youth have a better phone than I do. And they are surgically attached to their hands! I tell them if they don't put them away, I'm going to take them permanently and their phone will be mine. They think I'm kidding, I'm not. I'm looking for my next upgrade.

9. They think they own the Church!

Ever wonder where those cupcakes you left went, or why something mysteriously moved between Sunday afternoon and Monday morning? It's probably the youth group! They know every inch of the building. They act like this place is their home on Sunday evenings, running wild with games, raucous conversations, and the kind of chaotic beautiful fellowship that can only come from a pack of free-range middle and high schoolers. I mean, it's almost as if they have been raised to know that they are welcome here and claim this place as their own. Who could possibly want that?...

8. They eat A LOT of food! And when they do, they just get taller. When I eat it, I just grow horizontally.

6. They are always busy! They are into everything outside of church, too. They dance, play sports, play instruments, are in choirs, and academic clubs. They do art, science, history, all while in school and making time for friends and family. Seriously they are all mini rock stars, taking over the world with their gifts and talents. I'm just happy when I remember to go to the dentist.

4. Youth Group is at night. Youth group meets 5:30-7:30pm, which means I'm not home until after 8, which is firmly in the "I should already be in my pajamas" time frame.

2. They are plotting against you!

That's right—you—they are plotting against you. Just last week, they said they wanted to go back to Target. The place where they went to make lovely and thoughtful care packages for church members hurt in a car accident. Where they chose books, movies, games, blankets and sweets that they knew each family would enjoy, and so the family would know that they were loved and prayed for. Obviously, they are hoping to be able to do that again. What monsters.

So, my planned lesson for the evening was to discuss how we engage with trauma. How we don't always know what someone has, or is going through, and how we can be in ministry to those in need. Good plan, right? However, when I asked why they thought I had brought my dog, River, for the lesson, Kate's hand shoots up and she shared her theological explanation. According to Kate, River, with all his pain, fear and suffering, represents us. He is humanity: people of the world who live in anguish and fear. And, in his new home with me, (Yes, I get to be God in this scenario) River has found grace, hope and love. Salvation and peace, refuge from the storm.

Three years of Seminary and I get schooled by a 7th grader, go figure. And they all can do it, they all consider their relationship with God, church and one another thoughtfully and truthfully and don't accept the easy answers. Be it yelling at the movie the Prince of Egypt because Lily does not believe that God should have sent the last plague that kills all the Egyptian first-born children in Exodus. Or the Confirmation class going toe-to-toe with their pastor, Rev. Teri Thomas, over interpretations of Christian Doctrine. They are thoughtful, intentional and passionate in their faith, and were I a better person, I would be impossibly proud of them and share their wisdom with their congregation who loves them. Instead I have made it my TOP gripe about being their youth minister!

Thus endeth the lesson... I mean gripes!

Thanks be to God.

7. I don't understand some of the words they say! What does "Weird Flex Bro" mean? What is a Tik Tok? Why are you so concerned about Snapchat streaks? WHY DON'T YOU KNOW WHO TOM HANKS AND AMY WINEHOUSE ARE???? These all continue to be unsolved mysteries.

5. They are noseey! They are always in my business. "Hi Mo, how are you?" How's your week been? "How's your cat, Mo?" "Did you hear us sing in Worship" Is there Youth Group tonight and can I bring a friend?" How's your cold, Mo? I hope you're feeling better!" I mean, COME ON, noseey, right?!

3. They are extremely breakable! One youth even badly injured her hand playing a game in the church! Why are they so breakable?! Ugh, and the others were all so kind to Jackie, trying to make her feel better and distract her from the pain while the adults dealt with the injury. Then the other kids were trying to help and clean up the mess. Probably trying to hide the evidence of their frail humanity! Later, after braving the emergency room, stitches and pain of the injury, they claimed that Jackie felt bad for ruining the fun. Don't even get me started on her big sister Jessie being responsible, helpful and kind to the sister she "claims" to be occasionally annoyed by.

1. They are better at Theology than I am. Exhibit A. After recently adopting my dog, River, I brought him to meet the youth group one Sunday night. River was found dumped in someone's yard three months prior. He has the face of a thousand knife fights, is covered in scars, and was thin, scared and abandoned when found. Despite his look and his history, he is sweet and kind and loves other dogs and kids and to cuddle with. Anyone willing to accept a 50-pound "lap dog."



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Listen to Your Fathers
Both of Them

Girtha Roscoe Perkins’ father was a brick mason and principal in a trade school. A master at creating foundations and sanctuaries, he actually built the Presbyterian church Girtha grew up attending. While he enjoyed and affirmed his only daughter, he also taught her about prayer and money, and the need for giving and living a life of service, laying the foundation of faith his daughter practices today in her leadership and service at Northminster.

As a member of Northminster’s Session, Girtha was once asked to tell a story of a pivotal moment in her life when she felt God had spoken to her. Her testimony from the chancel pulpit about racial unrest and violence could not help but awaken memories throughout the startled sanctuary. She took us back to April 1, 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama.

It was an unusually warm evening even for Birmingham. Girtha’s father directed her and her brother to sleep at the foot of their beds, toward the center of the room, under the ceiling light, where the air circulated better than at the head of their beds tucked neatly in the corners of their room. She trusted him completely. He always had good ideas like that.

From her testimony:
“So we go to bed and I fall asleep soundly, just like I did every night since coming home from the hospital. At some point in my deep sleep, the fruit of evil was about to erupt across the street, but in my room, God was whispering in my ear. It was a voice that had no sound but was as familiar



to me as that of my mother’s voice. I could trust it and I did and still do. The voice said ‘Get up, child, and get under your covers’. I obeyed the voice and grabbed my pillow, pulled up the sheet and laid my head down at the head of my bed. And then it happened. The eruption of evil, a big bang, an explosive force so strong it broke every window in every house, sucking many of them right out of their frames, it jarred on water faucets, and caused chandeliers to fall from ceilings, doors were pulled open”.

And that ceiling light she moved away from had shattered and fallen on the bed where her head had been.

These events were far too common and earned the city the moniker “Bombingham” and surrounded an area known as Dynamite Hill. While her home was damaged, and fortunately nobody was injured, more undetonated bombs were discovered. The next day the National Guard, the governor and journalists descended on the city, but Girtha and her brothers were back in school with friends and teachers. Though they

had suffered the same attacks, the return to normalcy brought stability and comfort. Six months later a similar bomb would take the lives of four young girls inside the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Girtha came of age in a war zone, an African American living inside the heart of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s. Still, it wasn’t until she moved north to attend Indiana University that this well-loved, confident woman first heard racial slurs directed at her. A third-generation college graduate, Girtha was sustained by having felt secure in her family, her community and her faith. She said it herself, “It’s history, God’s saving history and a blessing of grace.”

Her father passed away in her early days at IU, and soon after, Girtha met Indianapolis native Victor Perkins. She worked in radio until daughter LaNelle Perkins Stowe was born. Girtha now works in the insurance industry.

For many years, Girtha was active with the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley and served as Clerk of Session while at Witherspoon Presbyterian Church. At Northminster, she has served on Session and is now a Stephen Minister, both of which gift our members with the affirming and steadying lessons her parents instilled in her during dark and shameful days in our history. Recently, her mother’s illness has kept Girtha in Birmingham.

She regularly attends the church her father built.



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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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