

PROCLAIM

A publication of Northminster Presbyterian Church

Comfort and Joy

Winter 2025

80 years



Finding Comfort, Finding Joy, or Just Being Found

It is a reality that for so many, winter is the most challenging time of the year. A season full of so many holiday celebrations and family gatherings can also be a season full of long difficult nights and worrisome days. In addition, we find ourselves in a time that is full of uncertainty and uneasiness full of division, discord, mistrust, and fear. This is part of the reality in which we all live.

The beautiful thing about our faith tradition is that it encourages honest contemplation about where we are. For you see, our faith tradition not only has moments of grand celebration; it also contains time for heartfelt quiet reflection. It not only creates space for ecstatic joy; it also makes room for deep sorrow and lament. It not only feels like soaring music that shakes the rafters; it also sounds like stirring songs played in a minor key. It



is the singing of angelic messengers and earth-shattering resurrection, as well as an ordinary birth in a faraway village, and a lonely prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is all of this and everything in between.

No matter where you might find yourself today or tomorrow or six months from now, there is space for you to be

exactly where you are. Your journey is uniquely yours, and there is always room for you at Northminster Presbyterian Church. And more importantly, the divine will meet you right where you are.

The angelic visitor who appeared before the shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night had a message for them. It is one that still rings true in our hearts and stirs our imaginations today. The messenger said, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” And then a great chorus filled the skies. They said, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace!”

Do not be afraid. The God of the manger, the mountain, the valley, the tears, and the empty tomb is the God who is with you right now in the midst of your human experience. That is what will bring us all comfort and joy. ✦



Perhaps you find joy in the participation of kids in worship, in a candlelit sanctuary on Christmas Eve, or in the noisy din of families in the Gathering Place.

On the cover:
Effie Russ finds joy in the Labyrinth at Advent



Northminster Presbyterian Church

Mission

Seek, Serve and Embrace

Vision

Engaging with Neighbors Near and Far in Christ's Love

Values

Christ-Centered
Grounded in the Word
Relevant
Inclusive
Nurturing
Serving

The 40s and 50s



2025 marks Northminster's 80th anniversary. This year, each Proclaim issue will contain photos and recollections of our 80 years here at 1660 Kessler Blvd. Our present-day mission — to seek, serve and embrace — embodies 8 decades of the comfort that comes from being embraced by a family of faith and the joy that is felt in seeking and serving our Lord and Savior.

On June 24 1945, the Indianapolis Presbytery constituted a new church named Northminster to serve the growing community between 56th and 62nd streets and the Monon and Nickle Plate railroads. The service of constitution included ordination and election of three elders and three deacons, the reception of 120 charter members and four baptisms. Three months later, our first pastor, Rev. Cloyd Downs, was installed. In the spring of 1947, members cleared the area (along Ralston and Kessler) with axes and scythes to make way for the first church building that included our present-day chapel.

The 1949 installation of Rev. Wilbur Closterhouse as senior pastor heralded over a decade of promise with the expansion of staff, building expansion, groundbreaking of a new sanctuary and membership growth that exceeded 1,000 members. In 1956 our iconic steeple was raised and in 1957 the sanctuary was dedicated.

To be continued... ♦



Our Iconic Steeple circa 1957



Our first church building (current chapel), and the new sanctuary in progress. Circa 1955.

Our first pastor Rev. Cloyd Downs



Our third pastor Dr. Wilbur Closterhouse

Interested in learning more about Northminster's history? Visit this link: <https://www.northminster-indy.org/about/history/>

Taking the fish out of Selfish

An Essay on Comfort & Joy

My father-in-law, a wise and wonderful gentleman born at end of the 19th century, used to quote from Franklin that fish and company begin to smell after about four days. That's when you should throw them out. As I began writing this, it was the fifth of what would be fourteen days in our daughter's home in an English village in the UK. I had been stewing about a health crisis with my beloved uncle and serious injuries and surgeries suffered by friends back home, but also about Christmas presents and my meal contributions in a country where a chuck roast is not called a chuck roast. And frankly I missed my own hair products. Exhausted, I was feeling like both company and fish. I hid out.

There is a collision of happiness and sorrow, especially at Christmas and, let's face it, even into the long dark days of winter. I asked mySelf, can happiness and sorrow exist side by side, stepping into the light and attending to equally, but each in its own time? It can be debilitating.

I was thinking about this existential dilemma, feeling sorry for myself, while standing outside my granddaughters' school when Alice and Eleanor looked expectantly toward my usual entrance to the grounds, about a soccer field away from the door to their classrooms.

"Yes!" the answer came.

"And how, pray tell, do I do that?"

"First, you breathe!" And I did, a deep cleansing breath, and somehow the permission came. I threw open my arms (you know how dramatic I can be) and happiness flew into them, ages 5 and 8.

Before we left the country for the holiday, I caught up to my friend Krista Wright, Northminster's Spiritual Wellness

and Wholeness Coordinator, to talk about the two-hour Open House she was facilitating on December 19. Titled Comfort & Joy, the event would feature a labyrinth, a sound bath, and solace in the sanctuary.

Krista is a soprano, a wonderful musician. We have talked many times, even before she became a certified yoga instructor, about the essential practice of cleansing breaths, for the voice and for a general feeling of well-being. There's actual science supporting this.

We agreed the pandemic tested all that, especially breathing when we had to wear masks. But during that time, Nancy Fortenberry, then NPC Youth Director, suggested Krista teach yoga in the North Parking lot on Sunday evenings during youth group. It became a regular Sunday evening offering after it moved to Calvin Hall and took shape as community outreach.

When two local yoga studios were closing, Krista proposed to Pastor Brian Shivers and Associate Pastor Karen Herbst-Kim, that we might offer the yoga program to the community from a permanent home in Northminster. Soon all the equipment from the former studios were available and Room 210 in the education wing was begging for a rejuvenation. Funds and labor were made available from Spiritual Growth (formerly the Christian Education Team), Mission, and Building & Grounds to convert Room 210 to the new studio. The idea aligned with Northminster's focus on community outreach, and Krista's personal goal, to offer events and tools for spiritual awakening – Mind Body Spirit. Taking care of yourSelf so you can take care of others. Listen to your flight attendant.

Which brings us to the Comfort & Joy event that offered "three opportunities



for quiet reflection, meditation and mindfulness," featuring a Sound Bath in the Gathering Place, a Labyrinth Walk in the Chapel, and a silent Longest Night Liturgy in the Sanctuary. Krista described these as peaceful and spiritually nourishing Advent offerings.

She explained that people would be invited to relax on the floors in the Gathering Place, pulling in bolsters and mats from the yoga studio, and letting the Sound Bath, including Native American flutes, singing bowls (wands circling around the rim of bowls) and chimes tuned to different pitches, wash over the space. It was a great success. "Tony Dzwonar doing yoga in the Sound Bath..."



candlelight everywhere...people on mats and cushions strewn all over the Gathering Place floor, and people sitting in chairs around the perimeter,” listening.

Inside the quiet of the sanctuary gave opportunity for Self to keep company with loss, perhaps name it, light a candle, and let the flame flicker up and honor that memory. Originally titled *The Longest Night*, the time spent in the sanctuary has often been a focus for the bereaved, which almost always means the loss of a loved one, but loss has broader meanings. Whether long ago or just a few days, death threatens Christmas unless you have a place that lets you honor it. Candlelight washed through the sanctuary, and stars

fluttered, while participants read a liturgy of poetry.

The labyrinth is thousands of years old so the idea of a spiritual journey is not new, whether long or short, toward a shrine, or in a spiritually constructed design, most often a circle. According to Barbara Dahl, local Lutheran minister and certified labyrinth facilitator, it doesn't even have to be a walk at all. During *Comfort & Joy*, the labyrinth was walked multiple times by some, at least once at a run by a child, and for a time, the journey was made from a wheel chair parked at the entrance of the circle. The design of the canvas labyrinth that we borrowed is an 11-circuit design, a replica of the labyrinth in France's Chartres Cathedral. Barbara suggests people go at a comfortable pace, but also be open to a spiritual experience – to let go, listen and reflect. One visitor reported “I didn't know I needed this.”

The candlelight evening participants were about half from the congregation and half from the community, with tears of gratitude shed before the New Year. A success indeed. Hopefully, *Comfort & Joy* will be a new Advent tradition.

I stopped by the church one quiet afternoon to check out the labyrinth thing. I'm not a marcher when walkers can get good and out of breath. I'm not a shopper who stops to touch and admire every few steps. I am a wanderer who struggles to see the dips and debris on paths, an issue with eyes as well as an issue as a writer. I found the labyrinth spread neatly in our familiar dark wooden chapel, flat and smooth, safe. Unlike mazes, designed specifically to trick you, with sharp turns to nowhere, the labyrinth's pleasant curves and circles invite taking the next step or offer you an easy way out. It's the quiet, I think, the easy walk. And nourishing. I was giving in to Self-Care, setting aside



Participants experience a Sound Bath in the Gathering Place

planning and controlling things I could neither plan nor control. I was good enough company on that walk. It did give me comfort and I came to realize that comfort was the door to joy.

And I had an epiphany: 'tis not the Self that stinks. 'tis only the fish. 💎

Northminster's Spiritual Wellness and Wholeness offers six yoga classes weekly in a variety of styles and challenge levels, by three top-tier teachers, all of whom are 500-hour level certified.

Yoga philosophy workshops open to all on a different discussion topic each second Friday of the month.

Watch for more programs coming: QPR scheduled for May, and a Women's Wellness Symposium is in the works for May.

Find community labyrinths at labyrinthlocator.org

More Sources of Comfort and Joy: Our New Members

Calendar year 2024 brought us an infusion of two dozen new members—18 adults and six youth through confirmation—who have been drawn by, and are already adding to, Northminster’s reservoir of comfort and joy.

It’s a varied and versatile group. They come from all over the Indianapolis area (see New Member Map), found Northminster by different routes, and represent a broad range of backgrounds, occupations, interests, and religious traditions. And they bring along an array of past influences and future travel hopes (see Looking Back and Ahead).

But their reasons for visiting Northminster—and for staying—have common themes. Inspiring music and art. Talented and caring pastors. A welcoming congregation. And a collective dedication to inclusiveness and helping those in need.

NEW ADULT MEMBERS



Jon & Lucy Boyd

(with son Tave)
Like many of our 2024

additions, the Boyds first focused on Northminster because of someone already here—in this case, Brian Shivers, who served as Lucy’s youth minister and who preaches the kind of “love and kindness” that Jon values. Lucy hails from Indianapolis (attended Brebeuf) and Jon from Fayetteville, North Carolina. In addition to parenting son Tave, both are employed in the business world (Lucy as a sales technology manager, Jon as a buyer), and both are drawn to sports, as participants and as coaches (volleyball, running, and sailing for Lucy; football, biking, and hunting for Jon).



Bryan and Kathryn Fisher

Music and social justice are themes of Katherine and Bryan Fisher’s membership. Natives of Ohio, they tried Northminster at the invitation of friend Katie Ray, and found an atmosphere of acceptance and caring for others that “feels like home.” Kathryn has suspended her own music-teacher career to concentrate on their three young children, but includes music among her favorite pastimes, along with reading and gardening. Brian is an attorney serving as director of housing and consumer justice for the Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic, and he enjoys travel, learning, writing, and family time.

welcoming everyone was and continues to be.”

Mary Holtgrave

For Mary Holtgrave, Indianapolis is home (Lawrence North), and Northminster is family, literally. Sister Cheryl Plunkett encouraged her to consider NPC as a worship home for herself and son Carson, and she found it to be “a very welcoming, friendly, and inclusive church.” Mary works as a business analyst and enjoys gardening, puzzles, bowling, and miniature golf. And for 26 years, she’s been maintaining an unusual family history archive—a “family wall calendar” with photos and birthdays of all brothers, sisters, nieces/nephews, parents, and grandparents.



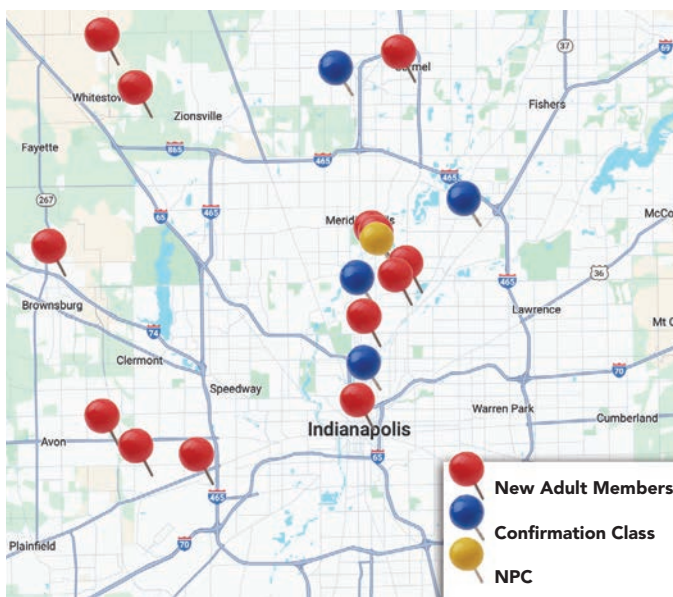
Melynda Frazer

An Indy native (Broad Ripple High School), Melynda is a certified nursing assistant who serves as a hospice aide, visiting patients in their homes or residential facilities. She loves animals, too. When Melynda began searching for a new church home, she visited Northminster and stayed, appreciating “what the church stood for” as an “inclusive and multigenerational” congregation. She also loves the music and ministers (“both are great!!), and “how friendly and



Dave & Susan Lindgren

Dave and Susan Lindgren moved to Central Indiana from LaPorte and were high school sweethearts. Although Dave was raised as a Baptist, they married in Susan’s Presbyterian church, and both have since taken active roles (including as elders) in Presbyterian congregations. They had heard good things about Northminster’s worship style and music, visited on Easter, and “were blown away” by the welcoming congregation



of 2024

and the “amazing” worship leaders and ministries. In Dave’s words, “this church fills my soul.” A registered nurse, Susan currently tends primarily to their 14 grandchildren and loves to read, and Dave works as a consultant for a senior home care company and likes to play cards. Both love to travel.



Albert Ma

For Albert Ma, Northminster was in the right place at the right time.

A native of Irvine, California, Albert was living in Broad Ripple and without a church affiliation when he felt the need to attend worship. He tried Northminster in part because it was within walking distance, but he kept making that walk because he “liked the welcoming environment.” Albert spends his professional life as an engineer, and in his free time, he enjoys board games, working out, hiking, and swing dancing.

Stephanie Meade

A native of Louisville, Stephanie eventually found her way to Central Indiana for medical school and to be near family. But in the meantime, she also made it to New York City for a professional dance career. It was a dancer’s foot injury, in fact, plus career-extending care from a skilled and generous doctor, that “inspired me to become a physician and help



others.” Stephanie is now a primary care physician in solo practice, who loves “museums, shows, dancing, singing, and yoga.” Having attended Fifth Avenue Presbyterian during her NYC days, she’s made Northminster her church home because of “the friendliness of the people, the inclusivity, and the music and arts in worship.”

Joanna Morse

Joanna Morse, originally from central Alabama, is a “cradle Presbyterian” who made some denominational detours (Christian Reformed in college and Baptist in early-to-middle adulthood). A Certified Grief Counselor, she works as a hospice bereavement coordinator and chaplain, and she devotes much of her off hours to reading, writing, and spending time with her children and granddaughter. Joanna connected with Northminster through Denise Harrington’s senior ministry work, worshipped with us online, and liked what she learned about NPC from Stephanie Alexander, the first member she met when attending in person. And she’s already signed up for training as a Northminster Stephen Minister.



Rosalee Mulligan

A Zionsville native, Rosalee Mulligan has some Presbyterian background, but she found her way to Northminster through a former roommate who provided childcare in our nursery. Rosalee started by joining the childcare team, before taking a broader role in the life of Northminster. She spends her work life in manufacturing, but much of her recreational time in painting, embroidery, and crafting with her hands. And she (like NPC member Bill Dynes—see cover of the *Proclaim* Summer 2023 issue) loves building Lego sets.

Daniel & Lyndsey Polak

(with daughter Elle)



NPC’s Vision Statement speaks of “engaging with neighbors near and far,” and Daniel and Lyndsey Polak clearly fall into the “near neighbors” category. The Polak family, including daughter Elle, live just up the street, and they can often be seen around Northminster’s Ralston Commons or playing Pokemon Go in the church parking lot. And now, starting their first full year as Northminster members, both Daniel and Lyndsey have been ordained and are beginning three-year terms on the church’s Board of Deacons.

Terry Post

It’s not hard to guess why and how Terry Post, a native of Massapequa, New York, found Northminster. For one thing, his dog Dottie is the official church mascot (according to our website). For another, he married into NPC. While living in Colorado, Terry met and married Emma Moore, a pastor’s (our former pastor’s) kid who was baptized and confirmed here. And when Emma returned as a member of Northminster’s staff, Terry came, too. He works as a construction contracts manager and, during his off hours, enjoys reading, doing crossword puzzles, listening to live music, cooking, and “taking [NPC’s mascot] for a walk.”



Moriah and Mason Root

(with daughter Alice)



Moriah and Mason Root came to Indiana (from Texas, then upstate NY) for career reasons. And they came to Northminster—initially attracted by the music and arts but soon convinced to “join and baptize Alice” here by NPC’s inclusiveness and how it “not only helped its own members but was truly focused on the surrounding local community.” Both

Continued on page 6

The New Members of 2024 (continued)

have STEM careers, Moriah as director of competitive analytics and strategy in the pharmaceutical industry and Mason as a mechanical engineer and health care practice lead for an engineering firm. In addition to spending time with Alice, Moriah loves baking, travel, and politics, and Mason enjoys music (trumpet and guitar), shotgun target shooting, and biking. They've also signed on as new Deacons.

Julie Stark

(with husband Matthew Vormbrock and daughter Emma)



Julie Shannon's most recent gift to us is another Julie—one who grew up in the same Bethany Presbyterian Church in Lafayette. After returning to Indiana from Nashville, Tennessee, Julie Stark initially checked out Northminster because of her Shannon connection, then decided to join because of NPC's "inclusivity and work for justice." A pediatric cardiac care doctor who describes herself as "passably athletic," Julie likes to engage, along with husband Matthew and daughter Emma, in "outdoorsy things like hiking, biking, and running," as well as family walks with rescue dog Bubba. They also love to travel and to explore new restaurants and breweries.

CONFIRMANDS

Molly Auer

An 8th grader at Eastwood Middle School, Molly Auer is the daughter of Abby & Ryan Auer and granddaughter of Sally & Jerry Gray. These days, her first love is volleyball (as a setter), and she also enjoys baking and travel.



Alex Crook

Alex Crook's family ties at Northminster include parents Susan and David Crook and grandparents Linda and Dale Theobald. Alex is in 8th grade at Creekside Middle School and loves tennis, snow and water sports.



Eva Ellington

Eva Ellington, daughter of Todd and Mandy Ellington, is a freshman at North Central High School. She enjoys soccer, watching sports, and hanging with friends.



Fynnley Kim

A Harshman Middle School 8th grader, Fynnley Kim's primary extra-curricular activities are violin, orchestra, and crocheting. Fynnley's parents are pastor Karen Herbst Kim and Won Ho Kim.



Ryan Kim

Ryan Kim, son of Karen Herbst Kim and Won Ho Kim, is in his sophomore year at Herron High School. Outside the classroom, he enjoys running, cello, orchestra, quiz bowl, and scouts.



Mary Winkler

For Mary Winkler, an 8th grade student at Eastwood Middle School, her favorite interests are writing and theater. She is the daughter of Molly and Clint Winkler and the granddaughter of Mary and Bo Walker.



LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD

Asked to reflect on some past influences and future plans, the 2024 Class offered these responses:

Other than parents, who's had positive influences on their lives? In no particular order:

- a "second mom" (importance of leading with love)
- high school coach (being a leader, loving God)
- best friends (living life to the fullest, seeing the positives, reminding me who I am)
- great teachers (importance of asking questions, passion for learning, perseverance, love of grammar)
- men and women in the ministry (God of love and grace); cousin (positive role model)
- great professors (how to think quickly and deeply question, inspiring to pursue advanced education and career)
- past physician (skillful and caring)
- grandfather (how to stay curious and pursue passions)
- good bosses and colleagues (outsized commitment to helping others)

Where would they like to go (besides to church, of course), either for the first time or again? Also in no particular order:

- Thailand's Koh Lanta Island
- Bali
- Australia
- Ireland
- The British Isles
- Paris
- France generally
- Rome
- Italy generally
- Europe more generally
- Montana
- The Grand Canyon's North Rim
- New York City (often)
- North Carolina and Georgia (ancestor stomping grounds)
- Alaska
- The Andes and Machu Picchu's Incan ruins
- Chilean Patagonia
- Any beach ➦

Mission Work Provides Comfort In the Cold

As the weather turned cold these past few months, the Mission team has been busy providing a warm hand to our neighbors in meaningful ways.

Family Promise:

The winter months can be especially difficult for homeless and low-income families. However, when an unexpected fire takes away what little these families have, there may be even less to feel “joyous” about. To help relieve these losses, the Mission team continued its partnership with Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis by contributing \$500 in gift cards to help the victims of the fire damage as well as by contributing an additional \$500 to purchase Christmas gifts for two other families.

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Indianapolis:

On November 1, 2024, Habitat for Humanity hosted the Multifaith Panel Build at Second Presbyterian for the second consecutive year. Ten members from Northminster volunteered across two shifts to build panels for affordable housing available to Habitat homeowners. The Northminster Mission team also contributed \$13,843 to support Habitat for Humanity of Greater Indianapolis this year – helping the organization raise nearly \$175,000 of its \$200,000 goal.

Washington Township Foundation:

The Mission team purchased 20 coats for preschoolers as part of the faith-based partnership with Washington Township Foundation. The coats were appropriately delivered on a cold, snowy day to families who did not have them for their kids. Hopefully these gifts brought a bit of warmth to their lives!



Northminster's Habitat build team, left to right: Dick Kraege, Bill Erdel, Matt Kroeger, Clint Walker, Chris Holewinski, Bo Walker, Molly Winkler, Karen Herbst-Kim, Ryan Kim, and Nancy Dynes

Wheeler Mission:

Wheeler Mission has a Winter Contingency period where their shelters will experience an increase of around 100 guests each day. During this time, the Shelter for Men and Center for Women and Children will rely on sack lunches



Kent Jackson, Elle Keppler and Mary Smith packed lunches for Wheeler Mission in the Gathering Place during Northminster's Day of Service.

to feed these winter guests daily. To help meet this need, the Mission team purchased the supplies to pack 109 sack lunches for the Shelter for Men and 112 lunches for the Center for Women and Children. More than 15 Northminster volunteers participated in packing the lunches after Sunday service.

Westminster Neighborhood Services:

The joy and mystery of Christmas are important in any child's life, but for many families struggling to meet their basic needs, Christmas is a luxury. The Westminster Christmas Basket Program helps create “Christmas” in homes with baskets full of necessities and gifts. With the help of Mission team funds, Northminster was able to contribute 362 bottles of shampoo and 820 sticks of deodorant for the Westminster Christmas Basket Program. ✨

- Answers to the puzzle on page 15:
- | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Brian SHIVERS | 9. Jonathan MCGEE | 16. Marko PETRICIC | 8. Rod MAIL |
| 2. Emma MOORE | 10. Timothy FOSTER | 15. Nate BOAK | 7. Lorna JOHNSON |
| 3. Melissa HOPKINS | 11. Tony DZWONAR | 14. Shiloh O'ROURKE | 6. Krista WRIGHT |
| 4. Yvinity TAYLOR | 12. Don DURETT | 13. Carol McDONALD | 5. John WRIGHT |
| 5. John WRIGHT | 20. Tim MCELROY | 22. Denise HARRINGTON | |
| | 21. Elisabeth KEINSMITH | | |
| | 19. Karen HERBST-KIM | | |
| | 18. Teri THOMAS | | |
| | 17. Cheryl PLUNKETT | | |

Bach – Eisenach, Leipzig and Cantatas

During sabbatical, December 2018, I was fortunate to visit three places where Bach lived and worked. The first was his boyhood home in Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany. This is the town where Martin Luther came to translate the Bible into German, influencing the composer J. S. Bach and the Reformation. There is an outstanding multi-media museum attached, complete with an instrument room. As it was December, there weren't many tourists around and I struck up a conversation with the musician there. When he discovered I was a church musician, he gave me a private tour of the instrument room and allowed me to play a period clavichord and harpsichord. One of the things that made a lasting impression on me at Eisenach was the number of Bach's theological books, driving home the fact that he was a true church musician.

I visited two other places where Bach lived and worked, particularly during his most fruitful time: St. Thomas school and church in Leipzig. The St. Thomas school museum offers a room where you can listen to professional recordings of Bach's music. I was travelling with my score of the Ascension oratorio *Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen*, BWV 11, which we were planning to sing in the spring of 2019. So, I was able to listen to a recording of this

work while studying my score in the very place Bach had composed it.

A sign posted at the entrance to the church from the school entrance, 1723 (translated in English):

Nobody may eat in church or commit any mischief. Should anybody leave the church without prior authorization before the service has fully ended, or stay away without significant cause, particularly on Sundays and feast days, each time this happens that person will be punished according to his misbehavior by flogging, imprisonment, or other serious punishment.

I was able to attend several worship services and concerts at St. Thomas. I have two vivid memories (or magical moments) of this lovely Lutheran church – one is hearing not one but two Advent Cantatas with chorus and orchestra in an evening concert. The other happened during worship while taking communion by intinction. As I stood in line to receive the elements, the choir, situated in the back balcony, began singing “O nata lux” by American composer Morten Lauridsen. The Northminster Chancel Choir had

sung this piece and Lauridsen once visited during rehearsal. When this piece began, I was moved to tears at exactly the same moment I happen to make eye contact with a female Asian tourist, also in tears.

Bach cantatas, Bach cantatas in worship at Northminster

A Bach cantata expresses a deeply personal faith, born out of Luther's Reformation and one of the highest artistic achievements in history. Bach's gift to us includes the original congregational song, instead of the exclusively Latin music sung only by the choir of pre-Reformation days. This practice of congregational song continues today and is particularly vibrant at Northminster. Bach wrote more than 200 cantatas, music inspired by the scripture readings for each Sunday of the entire liturgical three-year cycle.

I have been fortunate to have conducted some of the world's great masterworks with choir and orchestra – Durufle's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, to name three – but I can truthfully say a Bach cantata is the greatest challenge to conduct. The music is so well-crafted, subtle, and downright difficult that it challenges me to the core as a musician, and it stretches me to the absolute limit mentally and spiritually. Every person involved – the orchestra, the choir, the soloists, the listener, and the conductor – are required to think and be present for the entire 25-30 minutes. I have found that each time the choir sings Bach, they come away as better singers. I always tell the singers, “If you can sing Bach, you can sing anything.”

It is my mission to bring Bach cantatas into worship, where they began almost 200 years ago. This music transcends generations, backgrounds, and culture, and should not be confined to professional recordings, museums, or Baroque orchestras. ❖



John Wright conducts the Chancel Choir and orchestra in Bach's Cantata 36 during worship on December 8, 2024.

by Peggy Brandes, member since 2018

In the 70s, my husband and I had the pleasure of visiting Eisenach, Germany, and the church where the Bach family attended. We also visited Leipzig and St. Thomas Church. I still recall being moved to tears when I saw the resting place of J. S. Bach and the brass marker engraved with his name.

Johann Sebastian Bach was born March 21, 1685 to a musical family in the court city of Eisenach. His father held the position of town musician (director of the town band) and court trumpeter.

Sadly, his mother died when he was nine, and nine months later, his father also died. At age 10, he and his 13-year-old brother, Johann Jakob, were taken in by their eldest brother, Johann Christoph, an organist in Ohrdruf (and a student of Pachelbel). Sebastian had stunning success at school in Ohrdruf; then at 16 he went to Luneburg Latin School on a full scholarship with room and board, including free firewood for the winter.

His brother Johann Christoph taught him the clavier, and Sebastian promptly mastered all the pieces his brother gave him.

After finishing school in Luneburg, Bach took a position as church organist in Arnstadt, then in Mülhausen, and then became the court organist for the Duke of Weimar. While in Mülhausen, in 1707 he married his beloved second cousin, Maria Barbara Bach, a singer. They had seven children, three of whom died in infancy.

Maria Barbara died in 1720. A year and a half later, Bach married Anna Magdalena Wilcke, a professional singer. They had 13 children, but only six survived to adulthood. After a time as Music Director for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, in 1723 Bach moved to Leipzig. He remained there the rest of his life, serving as Director of Music for the St. Thomas Church and Choir School, which provided music for all the city's principal churches. He died of a stroke in 1750. In 1950 his remains were moved to their present resting place in St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. ♦

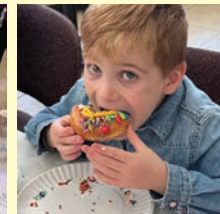
EVENTS



OCT: Andrew Whitehead (left) and Beau Underwood (right) gave presentations on Christian Nationalism

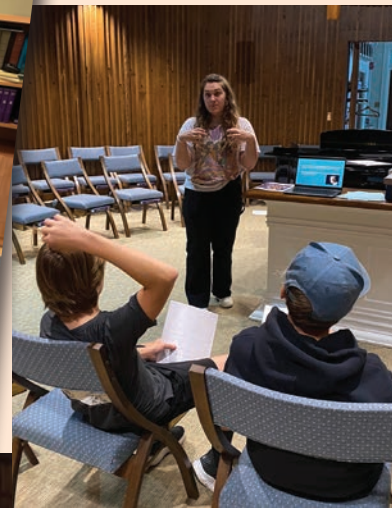


NOV: John Doyle and Mick McAuley have been playing music together on the international stage for 20+ years and wowed the crowd at Sound & Spirit on Nov. 15th.



DEC: On Dec. 1, all ages welcomed Advent with after-worship donut decorating, hot chocolate station, kids' crafts, adult crafts, and more. Crafts for comfort and treats for joy – or vice versa!

Youth Discover Their Own Ways to Comfort and Joy



seek, serve and embrace



Dear Northminster,

Thank you for your incredible participation in this year's annual appeal and exemplifying Northminster's culture of generosity. Your generous contributions and active involvement demonstrate the spirit of our congregation to grow in our outreach, our music, our mission projects, and how we support one another through programming.

Our church staff is phenomenally kind, responsive, and caring and your pledges ensure we can keep them around (and pay them more!). Together, we create a space where comfort flourishes and joy abounds. Together, we reflect Christ's love in our lives and outreach. Your commitment inspires all of us to continue serving our neighbors with compassion and grace.

May the blessings of comfort and joy fill your hearts this season and beyond,

The Stewardship Team

Andy Longo + Loui Lord Nelson



On November 20, 2024, two members of the previous Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC), Jerry Gray and Allison Gritton, interviewed Pastor Karen Herbst-Kim. The Wednesday evening program was a casual affair allowing attendees to get to know KHK in a more relaxed, personal way than we do from the chancel or in meetings. We learned about Karen's lovely childhood in Brighton, Michigan; working at her family's pharmacy even on Christmas mornings; her piano skills and amazing travels with Up With People; and how she eventually made her way to seminary and to ministry. Karen shared wonderful and poignant stories about life events that helped shape who she is today, her faith, and her work as a congregational pastor. Recordings of this interview and others (Brian Shivers, Carol McDonald, Dan Wakefield) are available upon request by contacting the church office.



In the last issue of *Proclaim*, we highlighted the most recent Congolese family we welcomed into our congregation, and we left off one important name. Pictured here, left to right: Furaha, Chanciella, Grace, Assa, Mika, Benigne and Blessing.



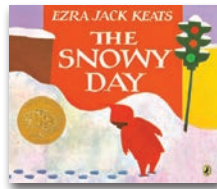
Emma Moore's dog, Dottie, has become the Northminster staff mascot and brightens the day for staff, preschoolers, teachers, and visitors.

Book Reviews for Children and Young Adults

The Snowy Day

by Ezra Jack Keats (a Caldecott Medal winning book) - Ages 0-2

Peter encounters his first snowfall and all the adventures that event entails. A beautifully illustrated board book for anyone who has, or remembers, their very first wintry day.



Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Sleigh!

by Mo Willems (Emmy award-winning writer and animator on Sesame Street and author of Elephant & Piggie early reading series) - Ages 3-5

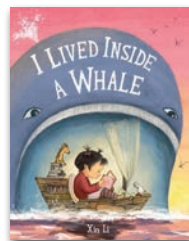
Pigeon really, REALLY wants to drive Santa's sleigh. When Santa has some errands to run, he asks the reader to be in charge of things, including watching Pigeon. But Pigeon is sneaky and believes driving Santa's sleigh is no big deal. All Pigeon has to do is convince dear Reader. Can he? The book includes a special Pop-Out Pigeon ornament of Santa's sleigh!



I Lived Inside a Whale

by Xin Li - Ages 4-8

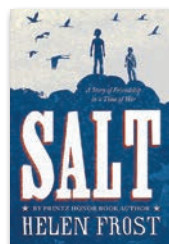
Emma's world is filled with noise and busyness, and she dreams of a place that is quiet and where she can find her own voice. When she learns of the existence of a blue whale with lots of space AND quiet, Emma sets out to find her perfect world. She settles in happily until she is abruptly interrupted by an unwanted intruder. Can Emma keep her private quiet place and her voice? Or will she be drowned out?



Salt

by Helen Frost (Prinze Honor Book author) - Ages 9-14

Two friends, Anikwa & James, enjoy the natural world around them in the wild forests, rivers, and woodlands of the early 1800's Indiana territory. Life is filled with fishing, hunting, and playing until British and American military forces converge on the territory, each seeking claim to the land and its rich resources during the War of 1812. Also at stake are the Native American tribes, stewards of the land they have known and lived on for centuries. They are as vital as the mineral, salt, in preserving and caring for the land. These conflicts threaten all those concerned, including Anikwa & James: Can their friendship survive? Can the two families continue to co-exist regardless of which side claims victory?



Crossing Stones

by Helen Frost - Ages 12-17

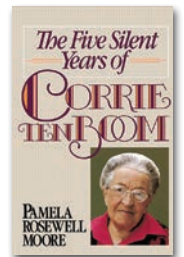
"Maybe you won't rock a cradle. Some women prefer to rock the boat." Muriel, Frank, Emma and Ollie all live across a creek from each other. It is the early 1900s, and World War I is raging. The women's suffrage movement is also raging. These cataclysmic events intersect, much like the stones the four friends have used to cross the creek to visit and play with each other. A new world is erupting. Muriel especially is mindful of how that eruption is shifting the status of women, including herself, in a brave new world of change. This book was re-released in honor of the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote, especially relevant in light of current events a century later.



The Five Silent Years of Corrie Ten Boom

by Pamela Rosewell Moore - Ages 18+

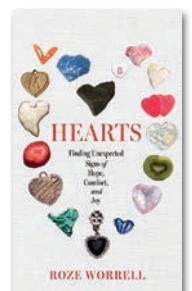
For this reviewer and any other avid reader of the 1960's and 70's, *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom was a given inclusion on most Christian reading lists. Her account of hiding Jewish families during WWII seemed an automatic companion piece to *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Most of my friends and I read and marveled at Corrie's bravery as a teen. However, reaching adulthood and striking out on my own journey, I moved on, oblivious to the next chapters in Corrie's life. This book, published in 1986, fills in those years, giving us a colorful illustration of Corrie Ten Boom's unfaltering faith. She continued touching people after her public debut as author, then asspaker and Holocaust survivor, and finally, as powerfully as ever despite a series of debilitating strokes. As Ms. Roswell Moore writes, "The details of these years...will encourage those involved with the elderly or handicapped – and those who are bedridden themselves – that God is at work mysteriously in and through even the most incapacitated. This book attests to the truth Corrie loved so dearly: that, in spite of everything else, Jesus is always Victor."



Hearts: Finding Unexpected Signs of Hope, Comfort, and Joy

by Roze Worrell - All ages

Images, quotes, and discoveries of all the places and spaces where the image of the heart can be found — if one only takes the time to look.



Swapping Comfort and Joy

By Elisabeth Kleinsmith, Family Engagement Coordinator since summer 2024



On Nov. 2nd Northminster held its first-ever (as far as we know, in this format) Swap Meet and it was a success! The visitors (shoppers? swappers?) were an even mix of congregants and neighbors who were ready to start shopping right when we opened.

When it ended a few hours later, there were lots of goods left over, which only meant that we were able to donate more than anticipated. My husband and I drove the packed U-Haul van to Thrifty Threads (which assists survivors of domestic violence and abuse), Wheeler Mission, and Goodwill. Numerous adults and children in need received beautiful clothes, coats, shoes, toys, games, books, home goods, and so many other great items.

My goal in organizing a Swap Meet was to create an opportunity for people to connect and support one another while also promoting sustainability. To show how recycling our possessions is an act of love for humans and for our environment. It was also an easy way to help individuals and families declutter and/or to find free gifts just in time for the holidays!

I am excited to continue this tradition for the church, and I hope that more people come shopping/swapping next year — when we open an hour earlier! 💎

Scrambled Surnames

Below is a list of scrambled surnames belonging to Northminster staff and volunteers as they appear in the Sunday bulletin (in print and online). Can you unscramble them?

Answers on page 9.

1. VSSEIHR

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2. EOROM

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3. KPSINHO

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4. YRTL0A

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5. HGWTRI

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6. GRWHIT

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7. NSJNOHO

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8. LIMA

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9. EGCME

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10. SFREOT

--	--	--	--	--	--

11. RWZNODA

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12. RTDUTER

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13. LOCDMDNA

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14. UKEOORR

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15. AKBO

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16. TECCRIPI

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17. EPKTUTLN

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

18. OAHSTM

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19. BKESMHRIT

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20. EYOCLMR

--	--	--	--	--	--

21. MNIKSLEHTI

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22. GRTNIRHOA

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

seek, serve and embrace





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Winter Renewal

On January 24-26, a multi-generational group of 87(!) Northminster folks gathered in the snowy woods at Pokagon State Park. Tobogganing, hiking, swimming, jigsaw puzzling, card playing, talking, worshipping, singing, practicing yoga, meeting new people, bonding with old friends, dog petting, fireside sitting, bird watching, or storytelling. Each year brings new people and experiences in an age-old setting.



Proclaim is a 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 jennifer.dzwonar@borshoff.biz. We cannot guarantee publication of all submissions, but we appreciate recommendations. Thank you for reading and for all you do to support Northminster.

Editor: Jennifer Dzwonar, jennifer.dzwonar@borshoff.biz