

# March 2015 North Star

A monthly publication of North Presbyterian Church in Williamsville, NY

## From Pastor Bill

The season of Lent is a chance to spend time thinking more reflectively about who we are and how God's Spirit is moving in our lives. Jesus' ministry began with a period of solitude. Forty days he spent in the desert "being tempted by Satan." But what really is "Satan?" That's the name given to those forces in our lives that call us away from our true selves. Literally, the word means "tempter." And there are innumerable voices calling us every day: calling us to indulge our egos, calling us to rely on our own power, calling us to pursue success and status and security. These 40 days can be a time to stop; a time to listen deeply; a time to rest from the frenzy of consumption.

That's why during our Lenten study time this year we are learning to meditate in the Buddhist tradition. Our tradition has largely lost its hold on meditation. We've forgotten how to focus. Our minds are filled with needless anxieties and when it's quiet the voices invade us. It takes training to silence those voices. It takes practice to cultivate an attitude of loving kindness and compassion.

Our time together began on Tuesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, and will continue each Tuesday until Holy Week. You may not be able to attend every session, but I hope you will attend at least one. Don't let the Buddhist origin keep you away; we have much to learn from the wisdom of other traditions. And when we do, I think you'll find their deepest wisdom sounds a lot like ours. More and more I'm discovering that all wisdom is rooted in the same Source; our various religions are interpretive frameworks for

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your spirit and lead you to your truest self, revealed in the Risen Lord."**

understanding the same Truth. It's when we mistake the religion (our small truths) for the Truth that we lose our way. As our Lord said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Let this season of Lent be a time for you to begin a journey of discovery; a time when you can put aside anxiety and fear to walk anew in the light of Truth. Let the Source of all life speak to you from the deepest recesses of your spirit and lead you to your truest self, revealed in the Risen Lord.

Peace,  
Pastor Bill

## Holy Week Services

### Potluck Seder Supper

Thursday, April 2, 6:00pm,  
Westminster Hall

The Passover Seder meal celebrates the deliverance of the Hebrew people from Egyptian slavery and God's great love for God's chosen people.

Before Jesus was betrayed, he shared a Passover meal with his disciples that has come to be known as Communion for Christians.

### Maundy Thursday Communion and Tenebrae Service, 7:30 pm, Sanctuary

### Good Friday Worship April 3, noon

Prayer, reflections and music in the sanctuary with mixed choir from Amherst, Clarence and North Presbyterian churches.

### Easter Worship Services, April 5

8:00am Sunrise Worship

9:00 Breakfast

Westminster Hall

10:45 Worship Service  
Sanctuary

## Palm Sunday Procession of Justice

On Palm Sunday, March 29, we will be having a special session of church school with a tour of our Family Justice



Center satellite next door to the church. This tour will be led by Mary Travers Murphy, executive director of the satellite. The tour is for 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

The 10:45am service will start with the usual celebration of palms after which all our 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders will accompany Ms. Travers Murphy to the satellite for a tour. The tour will conclude in Westminster Hall at 11:45am when our service concludes. We will celebrate Jesus' march of justice and healing by learning more about a center for justice and healing in our own community.

The South Side (4 years thru 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) class will do a normal session in the South Basement. Parents of all the age groups will still pick up their children as usual in Westminster Hall after the service ends.



### Easter Flowers & Music

Easter lilies, daffodils and hyacinths will adorn the sanctuary, and a brass quintet will play for our Easter worship service. Those desiring to make a contribution toward the flowers and music in honor, memory or celebration of loved ones, see Linda Gowans, Olivia Ebsary or Jeff Faunce following worship services on March 15, 22 or 29, call the church office at 716-632-1330, or print out the form at

<https://northpresbyterianchurch.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/oder-form-easter-flowers-and-brass.pdf> and mail it in by March 29.

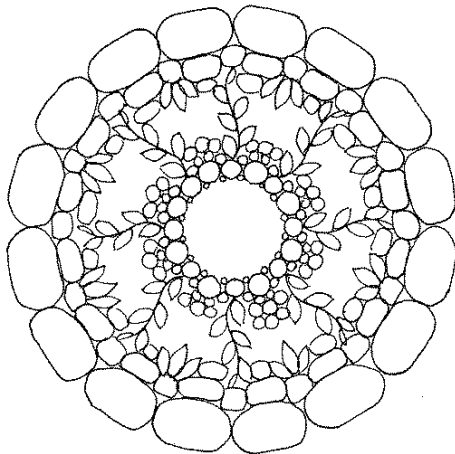
## Life-giving Wells, for the Celts and Us

**When have you felt left out or rejected?** Who gave you the gift of life when you needed it? In a fit of jealousy, Sarah asked Abraham to get rid of Hagar and her son Ishmael. He sent them to the desert with not much food and water. When supplies ran out, Hagar was angry with God. Then she heard God's gentle and reassuring voice in her heart. Appearing before her, she saw a well right there in the desert. Then she and her son knew they belonged to God. (Genesis 21:8-21)

**Was there a time you were given refreshment and, in turn, passed the gift to another?** David, in the midst of a conflict, felt a craving and said, "Who will give me a drink of water from the well by the gate of Bethlehem?" Three men wishing to fulfill his wish broke through the

Philistines' camp, drew water from the well, and gave it to the king. However, David did not drink the water but poured it out as a gift to God because the men had risked their lives for it. (2 Samuel 23:13-17)

**Were you ever rescued from a dark place and given new life?** Joseph was given a fancy coat by his father, was thrown in a well by his jealous, angry brothers, and then sold as a slave to Egyptians. There he found favor with Pharaoh, who charged him with storing food for a famine. Later, his brothers and sisters had little to eat and went to Egypt for food. They met Joseph who, seeing they were sorry for what they had done to him, provided them with food and a place to live.



*Gracious Gift-giver, open our eyes to see wells of blessing around us. Renewing Presence, thank you for the new life you offer. Dearly Beloved, thank you for the great blessings you pour over us.*

Wells for the Celts were a source of water, assurance of life itself, a cradle of new birth and a source of everything living. The journey into the depths of the well required courage and risk to reach the living water, which they thought was mysterious

as it came from unseen realms.

Today in symbolic terms, a well is a pathway between surface and depth. It is a link between our conscious daily existence and our subconscious life. It is a source of life and hope that will not dry up because it comes from the ground water of our being.

By sojourning at wells, one can reconnect with nature and the water that flows through the body of the earth, our mother. One could also consider a well with its dark space as that of a life-giving womb birthing new life.

During this reflective time of Lent you are invited to read more stories about life-giving wells and view beautiful banners designed and painted by Mary Mohlke, North's artist-in-residence, and director of the resource center, which is in the south wing of the church. These lovely banners are displayed in the chapel in the south wing. Come, reflect, be renewed.

## Thank you, Rod Bradley

After more than 20 years on North Church's Finance Committee, Rod Bradley is taking a well-deserved break. He resigned from the Committee last fall. Rod also served as North's treasurer until a few years ago. Most Sundays you'll find him in the church office signing checks, a task he'll continue for North.

Over the years, Rod served as an adult advisor on many of the youth mission trips. He served on worship committee, in choir, and helped prepare food for Friends of Night People (shown here preparing food in North's kitchen). **Rod, thank you for your steadfast service!**



## Pennies from Heaven

Jonathan Roesser (pictured below) is once again collecting "Pennies for Patients" to support the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Jonathan has single handedly collected more than \$1000.00 (in just pennies) over the past five years, and North Church donations have been a significant part of that total! Please bring in your pennies to add to Jon's total any Sunday through March 8<sup>th</sup>, or they can be left in the church office. Many thanks!



## Your Generosity Matters

Thank you for your generous gifts to North Church throughout 2014. All gifts – small and large—are appreciated, for it is together that we fund the mission and ministries of our church. It is through our giving that we glorify God. We respond with what God has provided us. And, our gifts help North Church carry out the four areas of its mission statement:

- Worship,
- Teaching and learning,
- Outreach and mission, and
- Nurturing and caring for one another.

Thank you for making a financial commitment to North Church for 2015. Remember that, despite the ups and downs in our lives, God's love is steadfast. Glory be to God!

*We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks to you!  
We proclaim how great you are and tell of the wonderful things you  
have done.  
Psalms 75:1*

## Newsletter Deadline

The next *North Star* deadline is **March 15**.

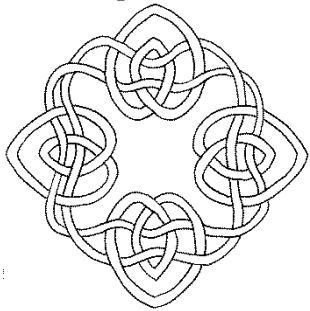
## Loving-kindness Meditation Lenten Soup Suppers

March 3, 10, 17, 24  
5:45 pm

### Westminster Hall

Enjoy homemade soup,  
fresh fruit, bread, and  
dessert.

\$5 per adult



Children eat free!

### Worship in the Chapel

6:45 - 7:30 pm

Singing, listening,  
reflecting

Register online at  
<http://northchurchwilliamsville.eventbrite.com>, in  
Westminster Hall, or by  
calling the church office at  
632-1330. Registration is  
required for child care.

## Update on Online Giving

Late last year, the Session, at the recommendation of the Finance Committee and Generosity Team, approved a contract for online giving. That is now being implemented through our website. With this new feature, you will be able to make a one-time or recurring gift using a credit card or a bank transfer. You will be hearing more about this when it is up and running.

## “What’s Your Stake in the Youth & Children’s Ministry?”

That’s a question our special Task Force (that’s been meeting to assess and vision for our youth and children’s ministry) wants to ask the congregation of North Presbyterian Church (NPC).

Jesus said to his disciples that all children should come to him, “because the kingdom belongs to such as these.” But what does it mean to bring our children to Jesus? Moreover, what does this specific congregation expect from this ministry, what can the average congregant give to it, and what should youth and children’s ministry even look like, or mean?

The following is a mission and vision statement that has been approved by Session:

- *The mission of Children’s/Youth Ministry is to create and sustain an environment within NPC that will provide the knowledge and experiences necessary for children and youth to understand God’s love in a way that they will seek to emulate it. We aspire to accomplish this as we are called to do by our Lord Jesus Christ so that our youth possess a moral foundation upon which they can rely as they make difficult choices in an imperfect world.*



- ***Our vision:***  
***Every child***  
***follows***  
***Christ.***

Defining our mission and vision is an important first step and one we believe honors Jesus' sentiment of welcoming children and ministering to them. Yet we are still left with these critical questions that every congregation of Jesus, including ours, should be asking itself. There will be several opportunities during March and April for folks to sit down with members from this task force and share their mind, ponder where they can be a part of this mission and vision, and answer some questions that should be thought-provoking and beneficial for all. *On Wednesday, March 4, at 7:00pm, we invite you to be part of the "New Ideas" meeting scheduled in the chapel. Folks have been meeting to generate ideas about new ways to worship and reach out to each other and the community. At this meeting, we will schedule an upcoming meeting to specifically discuss youth & children's ministry.*

*Also, save the date of Sunday, April 19, when we will host two exciting*

*opportunities, one at 10:45am during church school for children, and one from noon to 1:30pm for parents. Both of these times will be opportunities to offer feedback on youth & children programming.*

This is a crucial stage for our youth ministry.

Volunteer hours for these ministries are at an all-time low, the local school districts and community youth activities continue to compete for our young people's time, the family as a whole is busier than ever before, and Peter Martin is seeking an ordained call away from the congregation. (Please see February *North Star* for more details.) Please set aside time to attend one of these meetings to help figure out together how to best serve our children, youth, and families of this congregation, prepare for the future, and honor our Lord Jesus' spirit of welcoming and loving our young people.

## **Simplify your Life**

Declutter as a spiritual practice. Clear away less important things. Spend more time with God. On Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, from 9:30 am-12:30 pm, learn practices for leading a simpler, less-stressful and more abundant life with God. This \$5 workshop will include ways to de-clutter, a discussion on simplicity and Sabbath time, a Bible study, and resources to take with you. *Simplify Your Life* is offered by the Center for Christian Growth at North Presbyterian Church, 300 N. Forest Rd., Williamsville, NY 14221. For more information or to let us know you are attending, call Mary Mohlke, 631-0979 or email [mmohlke@gmail.com](mailto:mmohlke@gmail.com). You may bring a small item to be re-purposed.

## **Adult Education Opportunities**

Come and meditate with us in the library at 9:30 each Lenten Sunday morning (through March 22) and perhaps see this prayer as a hymn of hope for all humanity in language addressed to all the earth. "The Strangest Prayer" taught by Lew Bigler

The "Lord's Prayer" is Christianity's strangest prayer. It is prayed by all Christians,  
but never mentions Christ.

It is prayed by all churches  
but never mentions  
church.

It is prayed on Sundays,  
But it never  
mentions Sunday.

It is called “the Lord’s  
Prayer,”  
but it never  
mentions “Lord.”

It is prayed by  
fundamentalist Christians,  
but it never  
mentions the  
inspired inerrancy of  
the Bible, the virgin  
birth, the miracles,  
the atoning death,  
or bodily  
resurrection of  
Christ.

It is prayed by evangelical  
Christians  
but never mentions  
the gospel.

It is prayed by Pentecostal  
Christians,  
but it never  
mentions ecstasy of the  
Holy Spirit.

It is prayed by  
Congregationals,  
Presbyterians,  
Episcopalians and Roman  
Catholics,

but it never mentions congregation, priest, bishop, or  
pope.

It is prayed by Christians who split from one another over  
this or that doctrine,  
but it never mentions a single one of those doctrines.

It is prayed by Christians who focus on the next life in  
heaven or in hell,  
but it never mentions the next life, heaven, or hell.

It is prayed by Christians who emphasize what it never  
mentions,  
but also prayed by Christians who ignore what it  
does.

How would you respond?  
Each one causes to look at its strangeness all over again.

What if the Lord’s Prayer is neither Jewish and therefore for  
Jews to pray  
but it is not Christian and only for Christians to pray?

What if it is a prayer from the heart of Judaism on the lips of  
Christianity,  
but it is for the conscience of the world?

## **Bible Study / Resource Center**

We will be studying the Acts of the Apostles. All are  
welcome. No preparation or document purchases are  
required. Like last year, the leadership of the sessions will  
rotate, voluntarily, among the attendees.

## **Family Bowling**

When: Sunday, March 15, from 2-4pm

Who: the whole family

Where: Tonawanda Bowling Center, 574 Young St,  
Tonawanda, NY 14150

Cost: \$15 per ticket (approx. \$5 of every ticket goes directly  
to Camp Duffield) includes two hours of bowling, shoe  
rental, pizza, pop

This is meant to be a time of fellowship and fun for the whole family, and proceeds from this event will help support Camp Duffield, an organization that has provided many weekend retreats for our youth. Please contact Peter Martin for more details and to sign up, or you can register online at <http://northchurchwilliamsville.eventbrite.com>.

### Save the Date: Chiavetta's BBQ Chicken Dinner

An annual highlight for our congregation—and an important fundraiser for our youth fellowship—is coming this May 6 from 4-7pm. This event is a huge undertaking and needs a lot of support.

**Youth and parents of youth:** This is both a valuable chance to offer a fellowship opportunity for the congregation and earn back money on your summer mission project deposit (details on page 10).

**North Church folks:** This is an opportunity to serve others in the congregation and to give

our young people a hand up in their fundraising.

**Everyone of every age:** Please consider stepping up to help make this a successful fundraiser. Peter Martin would love to talk with you more about this.

### Save the Date: Youth Lock-in at Clarence Presbyterian

Save the date for another lock-in: Friday evening, March 27, through Saturday morning, March 28. This time we'll be at Clarence Presbyterian and will enjoy a night of fellowship, worship, and fun with their youth fellowship. Stay tuned for more details.

### Church School Teachers Needed

If you are interested in serving as a church school teacher from March 1 through May 17, please go to [northchurchwilliamsville.org/teachers/](http://northchurchwilliamsville.org/teachers/) for a full description of the teachers' roles and a sample of our curriculum. More curricula info can be found at [feastingontheword.net/Curriculum/](http://feastingontheword.net/Curriculum/). There are also *Feasting on the Word* handouts on the stand outside the Resource Center in the south side. One teacher collaboration meeting is scheduled for April 12 at noon.

### Earth Care Green Tip of the Month

Many cell phone users have one or more chargers constantly plugged in at home. These chargers are continually drawing power, even when no device is connected to them. The average charger consumes .26 watts when not in use, and 2.24 watts even when a fully charged device is connected to it. Unused electronic devices are called "energy vampires." A seldom-used TV or old computer is a bigger energy vampire that you will want to unplug until you use it again.





## You Want Me To PREACH!?!?: A One-Day Workshop for Sermon Survival

Saturday, March 7  
9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Kenmore  
Presbyterian Church

This workshop will guide you from selecting a text to writing a sermon to delivering it. We'll explore every step along the way, as well as such helpful detours as: Where do I turn for resources to design a worship service? What hymns will work in the worship service? What should I do about the children's sermon?

The Reverend Dr. Howard W. Boswell, Jr., pastor of Kenmore Presbyterian Church, 2771 Delaware Avenue, Kenmore, NY, will lead the workshop.

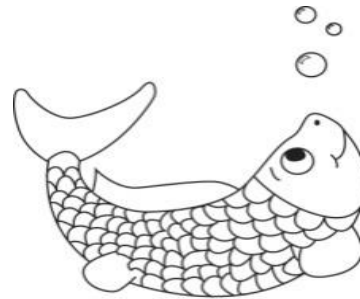
The cost is \$15, which will include all materials and lunch. Scholarships are available through the Discipleship and Nurture Ministry Team.

To register, send fee to Presbytery of Western New York, 2060 Union Road, West Seneca, New

York 14224. (Make checks payable to Presbytery of Western New York with "Preaching Workshop" in the memo line.) For further information, please contact Jan Tyson at (716)-668-1995.

## Empower Others through One Great Hour of Sharing

In 1949, churches in the United States made appeals for the relief and reconstruction of areas devastated in World War II. The next year, the appeal was repeated using the name "One Great Hour of Sharing." One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) continues as a Christian effort to empower, provide water, supply food, and give relief from disasters.



The funds collected are commonly split into thirds, with one third going to support disaster assistance; one third going to support self-development programs and one third going to support hunger relief. Throughout the world, the gap between those who have enough and those who don't continues to widen. In order to help make a difference in the lives of others, this special collection will be received at North Church on March 29.

The children will receive their fish banks on Sunday, March 1, and you are encouraged to talk with them about the ways we can share with those in need. **Please help them remember to return the banks on March 29.** When you give to OGHS you are assisting in the empowerment of others as they move past emotional, physical, and spiritual misfortune. Your help gives hope.

## A Message about Planned Giving

It's that time of the year when we start collecting financial records to prepare our taxes. For most of us we will look back at the year just ended and reflect how we managed our assets and controlled our expenditures. Sometimes we use this information to make future plans. Perhaps your thoughts this year will result in creating or updating your will,

something all of us should reflect on periodically. If that is one of the items on your agenda, please consider how you can include the church in your estate planning.

By including North you can ensure the Church will:

- have a secure source of funds to support its mission and ministries,
- be able to meet unexpected needs,
- have the resources to supplement the annual budget during tough economic times, and
- be able to capitalize on opportunities that will arise in its future.

A pamphlet titled *Remembering North with a Legacy Gift* in the literature rack near the church office provides more detail. Please pick up a copy and look it over. The members of the Planned Giving Committee (listed below) can answer general questions, but you are encouraged to consult with your attorney or financial/tax advisor for specific details concerning

your estate plans. Thank you.

*From The Planned Giving Committee:*

*Joe Alber, Roger Gross, and Mary Beth Karr*

## What Happened at Session?

The regular meeting of the Session on February 2 was postponed to Monday, February 9, 2015, due to the stormy weather. At that meeting, the following actions were taken:

- Approved the action item from the Finance Committee regarding the new online giving Privacy Policy, which will appear on our website, as required by our agreement with EFT.
- On a motion from Elder Lee Broad, it was voted to refer a suggested template for reporting fund balances to the Finance Committee for its input and to report back to the Session in the two months.
- Approved youth participation on February 17, 2015, at the Urban Diner.
- Approved the action item from the Property Committee requesting the purchase of two new standard refrigerators to replace the commercial refrigerator currently in use, with the cost to come from the Fixed Asset Reserve Account.
- Voted to dismiss the Task Group on sanctuary renovation with the thanks of the Session.
- Approved the mission and vision statements from the Children & Youth Ministry Task Force.

Sylvia Bigler, Clerk of Session

## Mission Project Registration Deadline

**On Sunday, March 29,** all paperwork and deposits are due to register for the 2015 Youth Mission Project *Hurricane Sandy Relief*. This deadline is absolute and final; no youth may register after this according to our host organization's schedule. Please go to [northchurchwilliamsville.org/mission-project/](http://northchurchwilliamsville.org/mission-project/) for all the final details, deposit information, and paperwork.

Adults, particularly those with construction and other home rehabilitation experience (carpentry, etc), are definitely needed for this mission project as well. Please note

that while there is obviously no cost, *some* of the paperwork is still applicable. Please see the website for all the details.

*For all young people who will be 13 and older this summer, and adults, please consider a week of fellowship with other Christians, a chance to see the New Jersey beach, a valuable life lesson in construction skills, and most importantly, an opportunity to serve the residents who have been affected by Hurricane Sandy.*

## Hymn Festival at North

On Sunday, March 8, during the 10:45am worship service, our choirs will lead a hymn festival titled “The Way of Jesus” by Hal Hopson. Ten familiar hymns will be sung by choir and congregation. A reflection will introduce each hymn. Two of the hymns will be enhanced by handbells and timpani. An abridged version without full choir will be offered at 8:45.

## Book Groups

All books can be found online at these sites:

<https://www.pinterest.com/northchurch/books/> or at <http://northchurchwilliamsville.org/fellowship/>

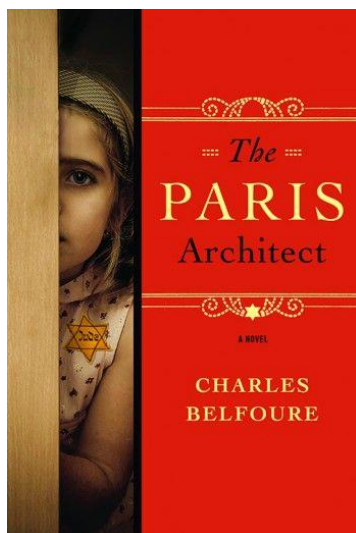
### MORNING, 10:00am, LIBRARY

**March 18:** Glass, cold, sound, clean, time, and light. In Steven Johnson’s book, *How We Got to Now*, (2014) he identifies these objects as the “six” innovations that made the modern world.” The author explores the history of innovation over centuries, tracing facets of modern life (e.g., refrigeration, clocks, and Wi-Fi and Bluetooth) from their creation to their unintended historical consequences.

**April 15:** *The Boys on the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics* (2014) by Daniel James Brown is set during the Great Depression, when an eight-oar crew, largely composed of individuals from dairy farms, lumber towns, and coastal villages of the Pacific Northwest, traveled to Berlin to challenge Hitler’s feared racers.

### AFTERNOON, 1:00PM, LIBRARY

**March 25:** *The Paris Architect* by Charles Belfoure. In 1942 Paris, gifted architect Lucien Bernard accepts a commission



that will bring him a great deal of money—and maybe get him killed. But if he’s clever enough, he’ll avoid any trouble. All he has to do is design a secret hiding place for a wealthy Jewish man, a space so invisible that even the most determined German officer won’t find it. He sorely needs the money, and outwitting the Nazis who have occupied his beloved city is a challenge he can’t resist. But when one of his hiding spaces fails horribly, and the problem of where to hide a Jew becomes terribly

personal, Lucien can no longer ignore what’s at stake. *The Paris Architect* asks us to consider what we owe each other and just how far we’ll go to make things right.

## ***You ARE the plus in Blankets+***

Martha Circle of Presbyterian Women at North Church is making its annual appeal for Church World Service Blankets+ this month. The cost of blankets is \$5 each but please donate as much as you can. The need is great worldwide.

Church World Service began in 1946, in the aftermath of World War II. Seventeen denominations came together to form an agency “to do in partnership what none of us could hope to do as well alone.” The mission: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, comfort the aged, shelter the homeless.

**More than 65 years later, the mission remains the same, though where and how it is accomplished has changed dramatically. Through it all, though, Church World Service uses 86.1 percent of all money donated to provide service throughout Africa, Asia/Pacific, Europe, Latin**

**America/Caribbean, Middle East, and North America, providing:**

- Blankets, tents, food and other emergency supplies in the wake of a disaster
- Tools and seeds for refugees returning home to replant their fields
- Wells for families living in drought-prone areas to provide clean, safe water to drink and to irrigate crops and gardens
- Literacy training and microcredit for women struggling to realize their potential.

The last few years have confronted CWS with increased demands on their resources. **Please give generously on Sunday, March 22, and Palm Sunday, March 29.**

## **Anniversary Coffee Hour**

March marks one year since Rami Al Maqdasi, Raya Jarjees and their daughter, Marilyn, arrived in Buffalo from Iraq, and Hani Al Maqdassy, Rami’s brother, arrived here from

Turkey! On March 22, at the coffee hour following the 10:45 am service, we will celebrate this milestone. Please join us.

The family’s achievements during this first year of refugee resettlement include driver’s licenses for Raya and Rami and the purchase of a car;

employment for Hani and Rami; and pre-school for Marilyn. In addition, Raya became a member at North, and Rami—a Presbyterian pastor ordained in Damascus, Syria—has been preaching in area churches.

Of course, they have many hopes and dreams. Join us for coffee hour on March 22 to hear of those.

