

North Star

Spring 2023

April / May / June

An e-publication of North Presbyterian Church

From the Pastor's Desk . . .

In spite of all the indications, spring really is here. It doesn't feel much like it as I write this, but I know it won't be long before I'm able to breathe in the warmth instead of the cold when I step outside. And every year when that time comes, I find myself feeling more hopeful and more grateful.

Recently, Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein and I finished a series of discussions on "loving your neighbor as yourself." The relationship our communities, North Church and Congregation Shir Shalom, shares is a marvelous gift. Over the last ten years I've had the privilege of cultivating that relationship through study, worship and community service. A few years ago, I even had the wonderful experience of traveling to Israel with Rabbi Alex and sharing hotel rooms with him around the country. Our relationship gives me hope. Whenever I despair of our capacity as a people or as a community to create peace and revel in differences, I think of our relationship with Shir Shalom and I'm brought back to life.

During the last several weeks we've been able here at North to hold weekly suppers and

study time for Lent. An activity that was ended in 2020 and not really revived until this year was at full strength again. I'm so grateful for the Deacons who gave up their time and their skills to provide a delicious meal each week and for everyone who participated in our study of a topic that's not all that easy to discuss. We learned a lot together and maybe even found ways to act as we resist the influence of white Christian nationalism on our society and within ourselves.

As we turn to the Easter season about to unfold, our celebration of new life isn't limited to a commemoration of Jesus' resurrection. We're invited to celebrate our own resurrection; we're challenged to let ourselves be raised up and filled with the power of hope as we seek more meaningful relationships with communities different from our own like we have with Congregation Shir Shalom. And we're encouraged to look closely at ourselves to find the places in our lives where we're strong and where we're weak so we can build on our strengths and learn from our weaknesses.

As I see it, our strength lies in our capacity to be a place of hospitality and compassion. By accepting and welcoming others, we can help create a sense of hope at a time when many are feeling despair. We can't solve all the world's problems or correct every

injustice, but we can find ways to respond with compassion and advocate for justice. We can stand with people who are left out or forgotten. We can share their struggle and let them know they're not alone. I'm convinced that's why we're here. We're here to live for the sake of others. That's what resurrection is all about. So, in the months ahead, I encourage you to celebrate Easter by finding those places where despair and hurt are living and be a source of hope. Develop new friendships, broaden your circle of relationships and let gratitude and hope mold your spirit anew.

God's peace to you all in the name of the Risen Christ,
Pastor Bill

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A Season of Transformation

by *Reyne Jankowski*

Changes. I've been thinking about change lately. Now that it's spring (well, at least on the calendar), change is right around the corner. The transformation from our dull gray and brown surroundings to lush greens and multi-colored spring flowers always brings me feelings of hope and renewal. We're awakened from our winter slumber with thoughts of warm breezes and lazy Sunday afternoons.

Romans 12:2 – *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

I've long been intrigued by the idea of transformation. Some of my favorite movies are centered around the transformation theme — *Big Fish*, *Seabiscuit*, *The Shipping News*, and *Whale Rider*—to name a few. I love seeing people change how they think, how they see the world with new eyes, how they change the way they feel about themselves and others around them. It's always so satisfying to see brokenness become whole and the story, and more importantly the characters, blossom and morph into something extraordinary.

So, what is all this leading up to you ask? Well, Easter of course.

Some years ago, I asked my pastor how it was determined what date Easter falls on since it changes every year. Curious minds want to know, right? His reply was, "Hmmm... it has something to do with the moon..." Well that just burst my balloon! Here I was, thinking there was some deep, theological reason for where Easter falls on the calendar.

In case you didn't know, Easter always occurs on the first Sunday after the Paschal Full Moon (the first full moon that occurs after the vernal equinox, which signifies the beginning of spring in the northern hemisphere) or, to further complicate matters, because the astronomical date of the equinox can shift by a day or so, the "ecclesiastical" equinox (i.e., the date used by the Church (March 21 by the way)). Did you get that?? Yeah.

This has always seemed very arbitrary to me, and truth be told, a bit paganistic with the moon and all.

I don't think it's by chance that Easter falls in the spring. Spring is the season of change and transformation, a renewal. As is Easter when we celebrate the greatest transformation of all—our Risen Lord. It's my favorite holiday. It's not surrounded by all the trappings and hustle and bustle of Christmas. On Easter morning, I always feel like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders and I can breathe easily again.

Easter has for a long time felt like New Year's to me. Instead of saying Happy Easter, we should be saying Happy New Year! Every year, Easter washes over me like a warm spring shower, cleansing away all the sins and fears and troubles of the past year. The slate is wiped clean, and I can start anew, refreshed, and ready for what lies ahead. A rebirth. A transformation. That's what Easter is for me.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – *So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!*

Happy New Year everybody!

Member Profiles

Meet the New Church Officers!

On Sunday, March 26, 2023 the newly elected Elders and Deacons were installed by Pastor Bill.

Elders: Joe Alber, Lois Anneler, Louise Cooper, Sue D'Angelo

Deacons: Sue Boldt, Jim Loree, Faye Wohlhueter



Pictured from left to right: Sue D'Angelo, Joe Alber, Faye Wohlhueter, Lois Anneler, Louise Cooper, Jim Loree (missing Sue Boldt)

We thought you might like to know a little more about them, so meet your new church officers!

Joe Alber (Elder) – Joe was born in Altoona, PA and grew up in York County in Central PA. He has a B.S. from Lehigh University, MBA from the University of Pittsburgh, and PhD from Penn State University. Joe started his career at Penn State University and other schools in the Midwest teaching and administration. He retired from Cansius College in Buffalo after serving 11 years as Dean of the Business School. Joe spent 6 years in the Air Force assigned to the Apollo Program at the Spacecraft Center outside Houston. He is an active member and past president of the Rotary Club of Buffalo and serves on the Board of the Buffalo Heritage Carousel.

Joe joined North Church in 2004 and has served as an Elder and on the Stewardship, Advocacy and Outreach, and Personnel committees. Joe has a daughter (who is a manager for Google) and 8-year-old grandson who live in Seattle. Joe describes himself as a gym rat who also loves to ski and ride a bicycle. He also is an avid skydiver with over 3,000 logged jumps.

Lois Anneler (Elder) – Lois was born and raised in Lowville, NY, a small town in upstate New York about 25 miles from Watertown. She was raised by a single mother after her father died when she was 8 years old. Lois obtained a BS from Goshen College (Indiana) and a MS from Buffalo State. She taught middle school English at Maryvale and the Kadimah Academy of Buffalo. Lois married Darwin in 1971 and they have 3 children and 7 grandchildren.

Lois was a member of North Church from 1979 to 2007, when she and Darwin retired and moved to Florida, but also returned to their summer home in Rushford Lake for the summer months. She and Darwin moved back to Buffalo and rejoined North Church in January 2022.

Lois has served in many roles at North Church, including Deacon, Elder and Trustee, and served on Worship, Nomination and Women's Association, and is a long-time choir member. Lois likes to read, cross-stitch, knit, travel, and sing in her spare time.

Louise Cooper (Elder) – Louise has lived in WNY all her life. She and her late husband of 18 years, Robert, raised a daughter and a son. Louise also has 2 grandchildren.

Louise has a BS and MS degree from the UB School of Pharmacy. After a brief 6-month internship as a pharmacist, she obtained her pharmacy license and went to work in the Pharmaceuticals research department at UB. Louise worked there for 10 years before taking some time off to raise a family. In 1995 Louise returned to the UB research department performing clinical research studies part time and also teaching part time in the compound lab in the School of Pharmacy. In 2007 Louise

retired from her teaching duties but continued working in research.

Louise and her family joined North Church in 1997. Before transferring here, Louise and her family were active members of the Orchard Park Presbyterian Church. Since joining North, Louise has been actively involved as a Sunday School teacher, in Adult Ed, as an Elder, served on the Nominating Committee, and for 22 years chaired the Pastoral Care team.

In her spare time Louise likes to crochet, hike and walk. She recently acquired a miniature Australian shepherd (his name is Hans) who keeps her quite active!

Sue D'Angelo (Elder) – Sue is a native Western New Yorker, born and raised in Tonawanda. She and her husband of 53 years, Chris, have two daughters and two teenage granddaughters. Sue obtained her BS degree at Buffalo State College. After a number of years as a stay-at-home mom, she went back to Buffalo State for her MS degree and started work as a speech pathologist. Sue worked in the Buffalo Public School system for 20+ years until she retired in 2004.

Sue joined North Church in 1976 and over the years has served in several roles including Elder and Deacon. She and Chris taught Sunday School and were youth group advisors. She has participated with numerous committees and groups including Worship, Christian Education, VBS, Sarah Circle and Associate Pastor Nominating Committee. She has also been a member of the adult choir and liturgical dance group.

Today Sue volunteers at Meals on Wheels and the Amherst Senior Center. She also works with Livy Ebsary in helping create beautiful stoles and paraments for clergy and churches. In her spare time, Sue enjoys knitting, gardening, reading, travel and spending as much time as she can with her granddaughters.

Sue Boldt (Deacon) – Sue is a Buffalo native. She graduated from Kenmore West High School and

worked at Price Waterhouse and for 28 years as an Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Research at UB until retiring 5 years ago. Sue and her late husband of 41 years, Dave, have two daughters and 3 grandchildren, all who live locally and keep Sue very busy these days!

Sue transferred from Westminster Presbyterian Church in 1992. She has been involved with the Worship Committee and as a substitute Sunday School teacher and is looking forward to serving as a Deacon for the first time!

Sue loves to travel, read, ride a bike, cook and bake, and spend time

Jim Loree (Deacon) – Jim is a WNY native who grew up in the Northtowns. Jim is a UB graduate with a B.A. in English, MLS in Library Science, and a J.D. He has a certificate of theology and ministry from Princeton Theological Seminary and is currently enrolled in the Public Leadership Program with Harvard Kennedy School.

Jim worked as an independent lawyer for many years and also taught paralegal and English courses at Buffalo State College, ECC and Canisius College. Jim worked as a crisis counselor for 15 years with Crisis Services of Buffalo and volunteered with the Volunteer Lawyers Program specializing in bankruptcy.

Before joining North Church last fall, Jim was a member of the Westminster Presbyterian Church for over 35 years. Jim has been very involved in the Adult Ed class and Advocacy and Outreach Committee since joining and is looking forward to serving as a Deacon.

In addition to being a self-admitted troublemaker (his words!), Jim enjoys reading, is a conceptual artist, and teaches sailing.

Fay Wohlhueter (Deacon) – Faye was born and raised in North Carolina until she moved to Tonawanda at the age of 12. She has a business degree and worked as an Executive Assistant for most of her working career.

Faye lived and worked in Houston, Texas for over 20 years during her marriage. While there, she was a very active member of the Sugarland Presbyterian Church. Faye moved back to WNY 25 years ago.

Faye joined North in November last year. Previously she was a member at Tonawanda and, most recently, Clarence, Presbyterian Churches. Over the years as a lifelong Presbyterian, she has served as a Deacon and Elder and worked in Christian Education and Bible school. Faye also volunteered with Habitat for Humanity for many years.

As many of you may know, Faye's mother was long time North member, Margaret Clark. Faye has a son and two grandsons. Now retired, Faye enjoys working out, playing bridge, walking and reading. She recently returned from a family vacation in Italy.

Who's in the building?

OneWorld Choir

You may have noticed on the Church calendar *OneWorld Choir* in the Chapel on Friday evenings and have been wondering what's that about?



OneWorld Choir is one of the Youth Empowerment programs of Bridges From Borders (BFB).

Bridges from Borders Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization founded by a group of immigrants and immigrant allies who are passionate about helping all immigrants bridge the gap between their native culture and the American culture. Understanding the struggles of acculturating to a new culture, they offer services, advocacy, education, and counseling.

Their mission *"is to assist all those who immigrate to the land of free to promote and advocate mental health wellness to their full potential."*

Diversity is at the heart of their mission and community relationships and they seek to express their values of diversity and inclusion in all the following areas:

- Providing culturally appropriate and sensitive services
- Advocating for the unique ways of each immigrant community and individual
- Engaging with the community in evidence-based research
- Partnering with community organizations as well as public and private funders
- Guiding the decisions and governance of the organization
- Working together with our business partners

BFB #OneWorld Choir is one of the activities under a youth empowerment program named BFB #OneWorld Program. This program is about promoting diversity, inclusion and friendships among children, youth and parents through collaborating with immigrant communities, parent groups, and schools. This program also focuses on promoting support and advocacy for individuals with disabilities and their families, who are from the diverse communities that have been overlooked and underserved.

Participants include families (Parents &/or Children above 7 years old) and student volunteers (12 years old above) with diverse backgrounds to create an opportunity together to learn from each other. Student volunteers sing in the choir, play some instrument for the choir, peer up with the special needs kids and support them to be involved etc. This program is funded by the Tower Foundation and is FREE for all participants.

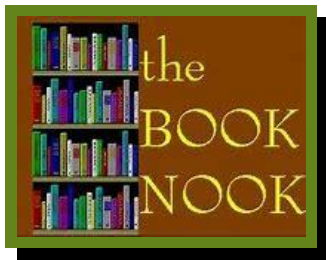
We were approached last November by the President of Bridges from Borders, Yan Liu, who was looking for a suitable place for the choir to meet and rehearse. After working out a suitable arrangement, the choir began rehearsals in the Chapel on Friday evenings in January.

On Friday, April 28 at 6 p.m., the OneWorld Choir is holding a community concert and exhibit.

Admission is free and everyone is invited to come! They are very excited to partner with North Church and would like to express their gratitude for entering into this partnership with them. Watch the Thursday News from North emails for details on how to obtain a free admission to the concert. We hope to see many North Church faces in the audience!

Click below to learn more about Bridges from Borders and the OneWorld Choir:

<https://www.bridgesfromborders.org/about#OurVision>.



Wednesday Morning Group

Jim McConnell

The March book for the Wednesday morning book group discussion was “Men Explain Things to Me” by Rebecca Solnit. The author looks at what often goes wrong in conversations between men and women. She says miscommunications and actions between women and men can result when men wrongly assume to know about certain things and wrongly assume that women don’t.

The group talked about how culture and even family upbringing can affect women gaining knowledge, speaking out, and thereby threatening men; and how work environments in business and elsewhere can create competition between women and men and affect hiring and promotion. While some changes have taken place, it is important that women and men listen carefully to each other to avoid misunderstandings.

Wednesday Afternoon Group

Marilyn Link

Our Book Group decided to vote on our favorite book from the January through March selections. In January, we read *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok. February’s choice was *Pay It Forward* by Catherine Ryan Hyde. In March we decided to read a banned book, so we chose Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*.

The book that most of us enjoyed reading was *Pay It Forward*. *The Chosen* and *The Bluest Eye* tied for second place. Here are some comments that members made about the book they liked best:

Pay It Forward: *A boy is challenged to start a movement of spreading goodwill. The story looks at the world through the innocence of a child’s eyes, and how a simple idea can have such a huge impact. It brings to mind that you never know how many lives you touch. Heartfelt, easy read.*

Pay It Forward is a moving novel about a twelve-year-old boy in a small California town who accepts the challenge that his teacher gives his class, a chance to earn extra credit by coming up with a plan to change the world for the better — and to put that plan into action.

The Chosen: *It was interesting to follow the two young Jewish boys as they interact with their scholarly fathers and grow to follow very different paths. Very strong characters.*

The Chosen is the now-classic story of two fathers and two sons and the pressures on all of them to pursue the religion they share in the way that is best suited to each. And as the boys grow into young men, they discover in the other a lost spiritual brother, and a link to an unexplored world that neither had ever considered before. In effect, they exchange places, and find the peace that neither will ever retreat from again.

The Bluest Eye: *It was the descriptive language used by Toni Morrison that generates the deep emotional realization of the extreme pain and loss of people of color in their community.*

Set in the author's girlhood hometown of Lorain, Ohio, *The Bluest Eye* tells the story of black, eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove. Pecola prays for her eyes to turn blue so that she will be as beautiful and beloved as all the blond, blue-eyed children in America. In the autumn of 1941, the year the marigolds in the Breedloves' garden do not bloom. Pecola's life does change in painful, devastating ways.

Two book groups regularly meet each month in the Dickinson Room: 10:00 a.m. on the third Wednesday and at 1:00 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday. Look for the upcoming books in the Thursday News from North emails. Come and read with us!



Meditation

by Olivia Ebsary

Meditation is the process of training your mind to focus and redirect your thoughts using breath work, sometimes music and visual images. I like to think of it as “cardio” for your brain. Need some reasons to consider a daily meditation practice. How about these 11 reasons.....

1. Promote good emotional health
2. Enhances self-awareness
3. Lengthens your attention span (one of my fav)
4. May reduce age related memory loss
5. Generate kindness
6. Fight addiction
7. Improve sleep
8. Help control pain
9. Can decrease blood pressure
10. Reduce stress
11. Control anxiety

Bottom line is . . . Meditation is something everyone can do to improve their mental and emotional health. AND you can do it anywhere without any equipment or memberships. I use an APP called Insight Timer. It's free! (There are lots out there and some cost money). The APP has guided meditations, music, sleep help and breath work. Give it a try.

Namaste, Livy

Your North Church Family Wants to Know About YOU!

We would love for North Church Members to share about the activities of their children and grandchildren. It is important to us to know more about our Youth and what makes them *More Than Enough!* (Montreat 2022 theme).

Please share concert and athletic schedules, pictures and achievements, a short story about a youth you know who is related to North Church. *Together We are North!*



Dress a Girl Returns

In 2010 the Mission Committee suggested that we join the efforts of other nondenominational groups in reaching out to girls at risk and provide them with a new dress and let them know that they are worthy of respect and are loved. The response to this request was amazing.



Inspired and organized by Beth Vandenberg, in November 2010, 25 women brought their sewing machines and scissors to begin cutting and sewing

dresses, while others worked to create simple dolls to give to each child. In response to publicity and word of mouth, the number of participants increased to include women from all corners of Amherst and friends and neighbors of North Church members.

Dresses are a simple peasant style; patterns are provided as are all fabrics and notions. Dress a Girl has been supported by the congregation and others, in great part through the Alternative Marketplace. Church groups and other organizations transport and deliver dresses and dolls when they are traveling for medical or mission work, visiting orphanages, building schools or teaching water purification methods. If we learn that someone is traveling to an area of need, we work with them to send dresses.

Nearly 2000 dresses, dolls and some shorts for boys have been sent to: Uganda, Kenya, Dominican Republic, Cambodia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Haiti, Jamaica.

The group met nearly every month for ten years until the Covid pandemic put a stop to our meetings. During this time, some women were quick to respond to early calls for mask making. Materials were made available for those efforts. Many women did continue to sew dresses and those are now appearing as meetings are resumed.

This popular project will resume creating colorful dresses and yarn dolls to be shared around the world. The group generally meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Dates are announced in the Thursday *News from North* email and the weekly bulletin. We start gathering at 4 pm. Some women are sewing while others are cutting, ironing, hand finishing or making dolls. A simple supper is shared, and conversation is lively. New participants are always welcome.

Imagine a world where every little girl owns at least one dress!

Winner, Winner! Chicken Dinner!



Do you love a chicken BBQ? We sure do! Mark your calendars for not one, not two, but **three** chicken BBQ dates this summer!

- ❖ June 6
- ❖ July 19
- ❖ August 30

Yes! Three opportunities to enjoy a delicious Wiedner's famous chicken BBQ dinner and at the same time support the work and mission of North Church. Proceeds from the sales will help fill the gap in this year's budget.

Event coordinators Louise Cooper and Sue D'Angelo will be looking for some helpers! If you would like to volunteer, please contact Louise, Sue, or the Church Office. Many hands make light work!



Watch the Thursday *News from North* email for all the details and ticket information as we get closer to the dates.



Sue Lee making soup for the
Lenten Soup & Study

Share Your Ideas

Do you have an interesting story or idea you would like to share in an upcoming issue of the NorthStar? All submissions are welcome! Just email your stories and ideas to n.church.npc@gmail.com and we'll do our best to include them in an upcoming edition.

The NorthStar is published in January, April, July, and October. The deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month before publication.

In case you missed it . . .



The Sanctuary adorned for Easter Sunday. Many thanks to Sue D'Angelo, Heather Randall, Brian Pettit, Pastor Bill and a few others for the changeover from Good Friday to Easter.

Contact Information

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The Adult Choir & friends performing Handel's Hallelujah Chorus with the Brass Quintet at Easter Morning Service.