



# North Star

Spring 2026

April / May / June

*An e-publication of North Presbyterian Church*

## *From the Pastor's Desk . . .*

Spring is finally here (he wrote hopefully). The cold this winter has felt interminable, but maybe by the time you read this it will be warmer, or at least threatening to be. Regardless of the temperature, though, Easter is here and the promise of new life is upon us. I'm always a little startled when daylight saving time arrives and suddenly it's light out past 7:00. I feel like there's more and more light each day to enjoy and possibilities are emerging that seemed out of reach just a few weeks ago.

For instance, we're planning to do some landscaping here at the church this spring. A number of folks have agreed to be involved in planning and planting so our entryways are more inviting. You may hear about some ideas for that in the near future, and when the time comes to pitch in, I hope you can help. It really is gratifying to dig and plant and grow something new.

Seeing the blossoming and budding of flowers and trees reminds me of poetry. Like this, from Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Jesuit priest who lived from 1844 to 1889, dying from typhoid fever at just 44. Hopkins was frustrated as a poet. He found it hard to navigate between the need to be published and known as an artist and the call to humility required of the priesthood. He also battled with depression much of his life. In spite of that, his last words on his

deathbed were, "I am so happy, I am so happy." His works were posthumously published. One of them is *Pied Beauty*:

*Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that  
swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pierced—fold, fallow, and  
plough;  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.  
  
All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.*

Such a joyful celebration of the world's beauty! We do live in a world filled with wonders. Learning to appreciate that can be a resurrection of sorts. When we have eyes to see and ears to hear beyond our limited and narrow vista, we find we are connected to the universe. That's what new life is all about. It's why we celebrate Easter over and over, never quite getting enough of it.

This spring as the doldrums of winter fall away and you get back to activities you've neglected for a while, take a moment every now and then to be astonished. Don't let busy-ness keep you from seeing the world with fresh eyes. Dig in the dirt, feel the earth through your fingers and rejoice. Glory be to God for it all!

Peace,

Pastor Bill



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# To You with Love (and a few tears!)

by Reyne Jankowski

After 50 years in the workforce, it is now my turn to retire (while still in good health and a bit of disposable savings!) to have more time to do a little traveling and focus on a few of my favorite things, such as gardening and biking during the warmer months and reading and scrapbooking during the colder weather. I'm looking forward to waking up without an alarm and enjoying a second cup of coffee while reading a book or welcoming the day on the deck of my camper.

As I write this, efforts are underway to find a new Administrative Assistant to take over the important work of the Church Office. While I will be here for a bit longer, this will most likely be my last message to you in the North Star.

I've always considered myself a "people person" and have been fortunate throughout my career to be able to provide assistance, guidance and support to folks who needed it. So, when the job here at North popped up, it seemed like a perfect fit—and it was.

It seems rather poetic that I started my career as an administrative assistant and am now ending it as the same. In between I earned a Bachelor's degree and gained a lot of valuable experience and skills along the way, each job building on the one before it.

Every job I've held has afforded me the opportunity to face new challenges and learn new skills, and North was no different! I had barely begun getting my feet under me when the COVID crisis hit and we all had to make a huge pivot on how things were done around here. Who even knew ZOOM existed and live streaming wasn't even on the radar.

Getting the live stream up and running was probably the biggest challenge and greatest achievement during my time here. When we were forced to close our doors and were scrambling to find ways to communicate and hold some semblance of worshipping together, Pastor Bill said we need to live stream—like now! He tapped his chest like Captain Picard on Star Trek and said, "Make it so!" And the



challenge was on! Now I'm no IT genius and I often say about myself "I know just enough to make me dangerous!" But it was enough to get the job done!

I loved every minute of my time at North Church. From the moment I walked through the door for the first time, you wrapped your arms around me and made me one of your own. I have never felt so welcome anywhere else!

I was also blessed to have one of the best bosses I've ever worked with. Pastor Bill let me spread my creative wings and fly! I sincerely appreciate the trust he placed in me, the compassion and forgiveness when I occasionally messed up, and for his mentorship and the long conversations we've had on so many different topics. I truly appreciate him allowing me to be me.

And finally, to all of you. I've developed so many friendships here and I hope to maintain them in the years ahead. As many of you know, my home church is Alden Presbyterian, but I feel like I now have a second "home" church family here at North.

Even though it's only been a little over 6 years since I've been here, the attachment I feel is strong. As I sit here writing this, I am fighting hard to hold back the tears and not ashamed to say that a few found their way through. I will miss you all dearly.

It has been my honor and privilege to serve you over the last 6+ years. I know the HR committee will find another excellent person to take on this important role, and I will do my best to impart as much knowledge to him or her as I can before I leave.

I know you will show your new Admin the same love and compassion as you have shown me, and I wish you all success and happiness in the years ahead.

Much love (and a few tears),

Reyne

P.S. This was the best pre-retirement job anyone could ever have!

## ***Faith Formation***

### ***Sunday School***

We only have a few weeks left until we break for the summer. We will continue learning Bible stories and parables, doing acting, singing, crafts, and service projects. Please stay tuned for dates and activities to come!



Sunday school schedule for the Spring 2026:

- 4/19/26, 4/26/26
- 5/10/26, 5/31/26, 6/14/26

### ***“Passing the Baton”***

After many years of helping area churches with church ministry and faith formation resources, Debbie Katz is retiring as the curator of the Center for Christian Growth (formerly known as the Resource Center). Debbie has been an active part of the CCG WNY for many years, taking over leadership after Mary Mohlke, its founder, died in 2015.

Debbie earned a Masters degree in Christian Education from Union Theological Seminary and, after many years of church ministry, Debbie retired in 2019 from her full-time position as educator at Westminster and devoted her time to the CCG.

Debbie introduced herself in the first CCG blog like this: “I always loved Bible study no matter which church I was attending. When my husband and I moved to Buffalo in the 1980's I discovered a church that felt like home, and an adult Bible class that challenged me. In time and in that class, I felt the call to be a Christian educator. Luckily I also had a wonderful mentor, Mary Mohlke who ran the Resource Center. Soon I was a very part-time CE at two small churches.”

As Debbie Katz retires as curator, she passes the baton to Kelsey Burns, a college student at Suny Niagara studying medical assisting. Kelsey is an active member of First Presbyterian Church of

Tonawanda. She taught Sunday School during her teen years and is a trained soloist, bringing her love of music to everything she does, including the church and the CCG WNY. Debbie plans to remain on the CCG WNY board and will be available for consultation by appointment!

To celebrate Debbie’s retirement and the transition to new leadership, the CCG has extended an invitation to **an Open House at the CCG WNY on Sunday, April 19, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm.** There will be refreshments and some spiritual practices (including a labyrinth), as well as time to visit and browse their resources.

The CCG WNY plans updates in 2026 to make more resources available digitally and to plan more area-wide events and initiatives. The CCG is located at 149 Broad Street, Tonawanda in the education building of First Presbyterian, Tonawanda. The Center is open on Fridays from 11:30 - 3:00 and always available by email at [resourcecenterwny@gmail.com](mailto:resourcecenterwny@gmail.com). If you would like to schedule an appointment, please email or call 716-389-2023.

## ***Mission in Action***

### ***Birthday Bags***

#### ***For University Presbyterian Church Food Pantry***

During the month of April, the Sunday School will, once again, be compiling Birthday Bags for the University Food Pantry. We have streamlined the items in the bag in hopes of being able to make 50 bags.



The following is what is needed for each bag:

- 1 medium-sized bag
- 1 cake mix
- 1 can of frosting
- 1 pkg. of birthday plates
- 1 pkg. of birthday napkins

- 1 pkg. of candles
- 1 pkg. of balloons

Optional items might be a birthday banner (difficult to find!), a roll of scotch tape, solid-colored plates and napkins for older kids or adults.

If you can help, please place your donations in the Shopping Cart.

### ***Food Pantry Update***

*"For when I was hungry, you gave me food"*

Matthew 25:35

#### **A letter from the University Presbyterian Church Food Pantry**



A huge Thank You to North Presbyterian Church! During 2025 your congregation provided critical assistance to the University Presbyterian Church Food Pantry as together we supported our

neighbors and community.

***In 2025, North Church delivered over 750 items ranging from canned fruits & veggies to peanut butter, cereal, and so much more. In addition, we provided 17 bags of toiletries, which is another critical need for families.***

Your generous donations helped us serve 1,952 households, a 14% increase over 2024. The fall government shutdown, SNAP benefit changes and the increased cost of living contributed to this greater need. It is clear the crucial need for emergency food assistance continues.

#### **Our Numbers**

2025 saw a substantial increase of 14.5% households served.

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>
Children	845	1,308
Adults	1,792	2,061
Seniors	763	878
Total people	3,400	4,247
Households	1,705	1,952

These zip codes make up our service area: 14214, 14216, 14221, 14223, 14226, and portions of 14215 nearest our location. No one is turned away on the first visit. If they are not in our service area, they are served and referred to FeedmoreWNY to find their area Food Pantry.

**The UPC Food Pantry hours are 12-3 on Tuesdays and Thursdays.** Clients can be served every four weeks if needed. And an emergency bag is available during church office hours.

***Volunteers - We Love Them and Need Them - Please help us spread the word!***

We offer a thank you to our wonderful volunteers who make this work possible, donating more than 3000 hours of their time each year to help provide food to those in need in our community. They staff the pantry during our Tuesday and Thursday service hours, receive and process weekly and monthly deliveries, and sort large donations.

If you would like to volunteer with us, there are opportunities galore ..... whatever fits your schedule and interests. Our use of an online resource allows you to choose the dates and times you wish to schedule and then you receive an email reminder in advance. Perhaps you have a friend or neighbor who might like to volunteer. Please contact the University Presbyterian Church office at 716-836-7660 if you are interested.

## ***Fellowship***

### ***Bingo & Potluck***



The Membership Committee is planning a fun fellowship event to kick off the summer. Mark your calendars for **Sunday, June 14**. Immediately following the worship service there will be a potluck lunch (bring your

favorite dish to share) and bingo!

We hope you will join in for a fun afternoon of games, laughs, good food, and fellowship!



## Balancing Act

by Olivia Ebsary

I've been working with my class on a few skills to test and improve balance and strength. Balance "changes" as we age and it's never too late to start.

I remember seeing Rod Bradley on a BOSU ball (half ball with a flat top) standing on the flat top and squatting! Whew!

What I do know is that balance changes with loss of muscular strength which reduces stability, reaction times are slower, medications can alter balance...and quickly! ...hydration, nutrition, even slippery surfaces and environmental factors will play a part. Here's a "[Check your risk for falling](#)" checklist to assess your falling risk.

One good thing about balance is that with proper instruction, it's a quick train. I have a few balancing exercises I'll share with you but if you have serious concerns, check with your doctor and/or physical therapist. They can be your best friend and help get you back on track again.

- feet together (heels and toes together)
- semi-tandem (big toe one foot to instep on the other)
- tandem (heel to toe),
- single leg (standing on one leg) with a chair handy. Have someone start the clock and stop when you put a hand on chair or foot down. Try for about 3 mos. I'll check back later!
- 30 second chair stand—how many "ups and downs" can you do in 30 seconds!??

### Pre-test

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

① 4-stance balance test (seconds):

Feet together stance Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Semi-tandem stance Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Tandem stance (heel-to-toe) Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Single-leg stance Time: \_\_\_\_\_

② 30-second chair stand:

Repetitions: \_\_\_\_\_

### Post-test

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

① 4-stance balance test (seconds):

Feet together stance Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Semi-tandem stance Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Tandem stance (heel-to-toe) Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Single-leg stance Time: \_\_\_\_\_

② 30-second chair stand:

Repetitions: \_\_\_\_\_

Here's a "[Home safety checklist](#)" to help prevent falls around your home.

Stay strong and shine your light ....the world needs it! ~ Livy



## Keep Fit!

### LifeFitness with Olivia

Classes are specifically designed to support older adults in maintaining strength, flexibility, balance and overall well-being.

**Circuit** Mon/Wed 9 am

**Pilates** Tues 10:45 am

**Chair Yoga** Mon/Wed 10 am

**Zumba** Thurs 9 am

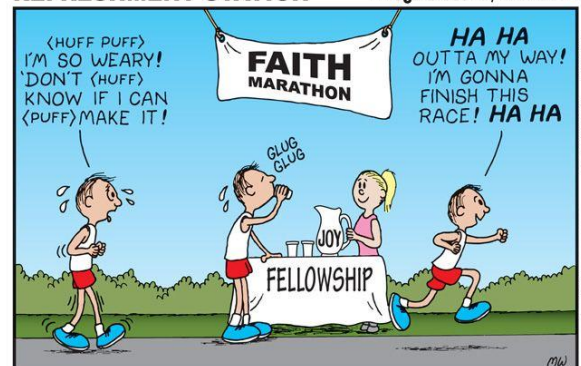
*Classes are free, no registration!*

*\*\*\*as schedule can vary, please email*

[oliviaebsary@gmail.com](mailto:oliviaebsary@gmail.com) for up-to-date details\*\*\*

### REFRESHMENT STATION

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.

— ROMANS 15:32 NIV

## ***This 'n That***



We are busy planning for this summer's chicken BBQ events. Mark your calendars for the following dates:

**May 20**

**July 22**

**September 16**

Co-chairs Louise Cooper and Karen Roesser will be looking for scoopers, packers, and runners on the day of the events. Watch the Thursday *News from North* emails in the weeks ahead for details.

The funds raised from the BBQs help to carry on the work and mission of North Church.

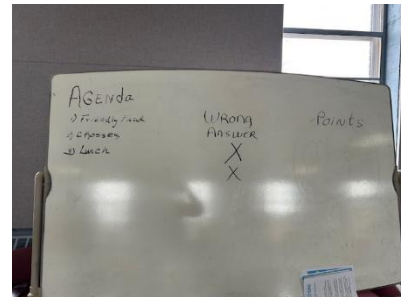
## ***Celebrating Easter!***

Sunday school students and youth group members collaborated on celebrating the Easter season for our homebound friends and neighbors! They decorated gift bags which the Deacons filled with goodies and delivered.



## ***Intergenerational Event***

On Sunday, February 22, the Adult Ed and Sunday School collaborated on an Intergenerational Event. There was a kid-friendly lunch, a lively game of Friendly Feud (testing everyone's bible knowledge!), and everyone made their own crosses from Balsa wood. It was a lively and fun time for all who participated!



## ***Youth Group Lock In***

The North youth along with leader, Marcia Hunt, staged an overnight lock-in event the Saturday before Palm Sunday. They colored eggs, had an Easter egg hunt, filled goodie bags with Easter candy to hand out on Easter Sunday, and constructed a beautiful cross of colored tissue paper to be displayed in the Sanctuary on Easter Sunday. This has become a bit of tradition over the last few years, but they really outdid themselves this year!





## ***Final Thoughts***

### ***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!*

### ***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](mailto: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 15<sup>th</sup> of the month before publication.*

## ***Looking Ahead***

### ***Mark Your Calendars***

- April 2 – Maundy Thursday
- April 3 – Good Friday
- April 5 – Easter Sunday
- April 6 – Easter Monday (Office Closed)
- April 25 – OneWorld Choir Concert & Showcase
- April 30 – LifeLine Screening Event
- May 2 – Memorial Service for Ginny Bradley
- May 17 – BGMC Spring Concert
- May 25 – Memorial Day (Office Closed)
- June 14 – Fellowship Potluck Lunch & Bingo
- June 21 – Summer Worship Hours Begin

### **Contact Information**

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