



North Star

Summer 2026

July / August / September

An e-publication of North Presbyterian Church

From the Pastor's Desk . . .

I'm not the first to observe that the only reliable constant in our lives is change. Change comes whether we're ready for it or not and usually we have very little chance to plan for it. But as you know from the last North Star, a change here at North has been in the works for some time and now it's finally here. I've been putting off writing about this as long as I could, but now I can't avoid it. Our wonderful administrative assistant, Reyne Jankowski, is retiring in July and while we will be welcoming a new administrative assistant in her place, saying good-bye to Reyne is really hard.

North has been extremely fortunate to have had several excellent administrative assistants over the years. Reyne began her work in December, 2019, following the departure of Cynthia Machamer who went on to a more challenging position in another not-for-profit. Cynthia had done a wonderful job for us and it was hard to imagine anyone coming in doing as well. But Reyne took to the work beautifully. Her grace under pressure during one of the busiest seasons of the year was outstanding. But when 2020 came along and all the adjustments we had to make because of the pandemic, her presence in the office became absolutely essential. Reyne rose to the challenge of "doing church" at a time when none of us really knew what we should do to keep things running. Her unflappable manner and willingness to learn new skills, such as how to create a livestream

service from the ground up, made all our lives easier and certainly made my life more enjoyable.

Add to that her humor and friendly demeanor when dealing with church members and outside groups using the facilities, as well as her extraordinary organizational skills, and it's hard to imagine how this place will run without her here. I will miss Reyne greatly, as I know all of you will, too. And I am deeply grateful for her work here. Thank you, Reyne, for your dedication and your expertise, and the care you've given to all of us as the hub of our life here at North. I don't know when Reyne's final day will be, but we will have a send off one Sunday after church. In the meantime, I hope everyone will join me in wishing her all the best in retirement and be sure to let her know how appreciated she is.

Meanwhile, we are preparing to welcome Maria Casey as our new administrative assistant. She brings a host of skills and experience that I know will be beneficial to us. She begins her training for the job the first week of July. Please be sure to welcome her warmly and let her know she's not alone in this new job, but we're here to help in any way we can and make this transition an easy one.

In other areas of church life, I hope you can join us on Sunday, July 12th, at 5:00 for our Interfaith Picnic. We've invited folks from Masjir Al-Noor (the mosque on Heim Road), Congregation Shir Shalom, the Chinmaya Mission and Bridges from Borders to join us for a picnic so we can all get to know one another better. It should be a great time and I hope you can come. Our community is blessed to have a rich diversity of faiths and cultures and it's a privilege to

host a gathering with our neighbors. Bring something you like to pass and don't be shy about sampling some new foods as we share our dishes with one another.

Peace,

Pastor Bill



Pennies from Heaven

by Reyne Jankowski

Have you ever found a penny on the ground and picked it up? Maybe you thought it would bring you good luck. Or maybe it was a loved one sending you a message.

For years, my sister has picked up and saved every penny she finds because she believes it is a message from our mother. This long-held belief reflects a broader spiritual interpretation shared by many people.

Spiritually, finding a "penny from heaven" is often understood as a comforting sign from a deceased loved one or a small, unexpected blessing from a higher power. It can serve as a reminder of continued spiritual connection and support.

The spiritual meanings of finding a penny can be broken down into a few specific interpretations:

- **Visits from Loved Ones:** Many people interpret an unexpected penny as a form of communication from someone who has passed away. It may be seen as a sign of comfort, presence, or remembrance during a difficult time.
- **Divine Blessings:** Some view these coins as small expressions of grace from God, the universe, or guardian angels. Despite their limited monetary value, they can symbolize gratitude for life's everyday blessings.
- **Signs of Encouragement:** Pennies are often noticed at moments when reassurance is needed, serving as a simple reminder to remain hopeful and keep moving forward.

So, what will you do the next time you find a penny? Will you choose to keep these coins in a special place or give them to others in need as a way of passing the blessing forward?

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Property Updates

The Sacred Grounds Project

by Joe Alber



The first phase of the project is largely complete, including filling in some low spots with topsoil and spreading mulch around the new plantings near the south main entrance. Because of attractive pricing from Russell's Tree and Shrub Farm, some of the work envisioned for later was moved forward.

Phase 1.

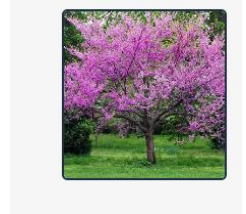
The main entrance on the Southside has attractive Castle Spire Holly planted on either side of the walk. Upon reaching maturity they will be about 8' tall with a girth of 3-4'. The leaves are dark green, and the plant produces a modest amount of green berries that mature to a bright red. There is one Castle Wall Holly for pollination. All the plants are deer resistant, but in the event the deer don't know this Deer Scram and Deer & Rabbit Mace are being applied regularly along with a light dusting of Cayenne. In the winter the holly will be wrapped in a protective coat.

Three Dwarf Alberta Spruce are planted along the office wing. These are cone shaped and have tightly packed needles. They grow very slowly and when mature will be about 8' tall with a girth at the base of 4'. It is assumed that deer will not find them appetizing, but if this is inaccurate a suitable repellent will be applied. The shaded side (next to the building) is susceptible to spider mites, and those areas have been treated with Neem Oil.



The end of the office wing is anchored by a single Japanese Holly. It is cylindrical and when mature will stand 8' tall with a girth of 3'. It produces small dark berries and vibrant dark green foliage. These also are supposed to be deer resistant but have been treated to add extra protection.

Two Eastern Redbud trees were planted along the south wing where the chapel and library are located. These are early bloomers with purplish-pink flowers and the picture shows what they will look like in the spring. The flowers are replaced with heart-shaped leaves that transition to a multicolored collage as the seasons change. A third Eastern Redbud has been planted at the end of the Memorial Garden Wall which compliments the work of the volunteers who lovingly maintain the Memorial Garden. A sleeve has been installed on these and all the other trees that are designed to prevent wildlife from chewing on the bark during the colder months when snow prevents animals from grazing on grass.



Two autumn blaze maples are planted on the north side of the wing opposite Westminster Hall. These grow to a height of 50' and produce leaves that turn a gorgeous red as shown in the accompanying picture of what the trees will look like in the fall. They replace trees that grew on this side of the building that were removed many years ago.

Contributors

The following individuals provided funding for Phase 1. Kerri & Randy Bigler; Louise Cooper; Livy & Jeff Ebsary; Paula Firestone in memory of Pauline; Norma & Bob Henderson; Mary Beth Karr & Joe Alber; Patti Thayer & Fred Hacker. The bulk of the labor was supplied by Joe, Livy, and Jeff.

Phase 2: Still A Dream



There are several unhealthy and unattractive bushes around the North and Front of the sanctuary that need to be removed and new plantings installed. A decision must be made about an unhealthy tree on the South side and a couple more trees and shrubs should be added to enhance the overall attractiveness of the campus.

Something needs to be done about the appearance of the sign and the vegetation around it. This is what most people see even before the building comes into view and it should make a positive impression. In fact, a strong case can be made for someday replacing the existing sign with an electric sign encased in the existing brick enclosure. This could be used to repetitively highlight both the spiritual and community activities that occur in the building and serve as an invitation to involve more people in the life of the church.

Preparatory Steps

Plans are to begin removing some of the unhealthy bushes and planning what the next phase might look like. As with the first phase, we are asking that individuals wishing to participate contribute beyond their annual pledge. A special account has been set up to record the contributions. Not much will happen until there is a strong likelihood that money will be forthcoming. If anyone has questions or suggestions, please reach out to Livy Ebsary, Joe Alber or Pastor Bill.

Help Needed

A couple of volunteers are needed to water the new plants. It takes about an hour and it must be done at least twice a week until the cold weather arrives. Coiled hoses have been placed on both sides of the building that reach everything except the tree at the end of the Memorial Wall. That requires a small bucket of water to be carried from one of the faucets. Please let the office know if you are interested.

***Financial Snapshot
May 31, 2026***

	<u>YTD ACTUAL</u>	<u>YTD BUDGET</u>	<u>ANNUAL BUDGET</u>
INCOME:			
Donations	\$123,852	\$114,501	\$274,795
Building Use	\$26,065	\$30,832	\$74,000
Investment & Other Income	\$17,961	\$17,123	\$41,100
Total Income	\$167,879	\$162,456	\$389,895
	<u>YTD ACTUAL</u>	<u>YTD BUDGET</u>	<u>ANNUAL BUDGET</u>
EXPENSES:			
Personnel	\$122,916	\$119,458	\$286,693
Property	\$46,769	\$43,151	\$103,550
Programs	\$2,720	\$3,031	\$7,275
Total Expenses	\$172,406	\$165,640	\$397,518
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$4,256)	(\$3,284)	

Overall, North Church is in reasonable financial health. Had we received the May payment from LE3, we would be very close to a balanced budget at the end of May. One concern is that as of May 31, our pledges are \$7,330 below budget; in the total donations this is offset by other donations that are \$13,000 ahead of suggested. Since Summer is typically slow for pledges, being behind by over \$7,000 at the end of May is a concern. As we get into roof replacement and loss of solar panels in the coming months, we will need to be vigilant about financial health.

We continue to be deeply appreciative of your financial support to the life and ministry of North Church.

Please feel free to contact any member of the Finance Committee if you have questions.

Finance Committee: Neil Arnold, Jim Atwood, Brad Hahn, Marci Hunt, Tim Hutton, Mary Beth Karr and Dick Mesmer

Faith Formation

Adult Ed



Come join Adult Ed's summertime Bible study. The Adult Ed class meets 15 minutes after the 9:30 am worship service. We are discussing the Horizons Bible study "*Finding Resilience, Joy*

and Our Identity in Jesus Christ." Books available from Debbie Katz for \$14. Each lesson is self-contained, so come as your schedule allows. We serve lemonade and cookies. Plan to join in the discussion.

Finding Our Joy led by Nancy Bassett

July 13: Lesson 4, The Prodigal

July 20: Lesson 5, The Gift of the Woman who was Poor

July 27: Lesson 6, Finding Our Joy in Christ

Finding Our Identity led by Debbie Katz

Aug 3: Lesson 7, The Woman Who Was Bent Over

Aug 10: Lesson 8, Remembering Jesus' Baptism

Aug 17: Lesson 9, When You Are Walking with Jesus

Join the Adult Education class and grow in your faith among friends. Such an opportunity to be in community with like-minded people should not be missed. Everyone is welcome!

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Thanks to Nick Hengeveld

08-26-2011

HE'S STANDING RIGHT BEHIND ME, ISN'T HE?

Advocacy and Outreach

First Recipient of Goodwill Boot Fund Program Named

By Keith Gillogly



This winter, North Church and its Advocacy and Outreach Committee began supporting the Goodskills program of Goodwill of Western New York. The Goodskills program equips local job seekers with basic skills needed for manufacturing jobs, and other roles, making them more attractive candidates for local companies.

Specifically, North Church gave \$1,200 to create the Ready to WorkBoot Funding Program. When employees obtain a new job in manufacturing, they're often required to supply their own work boots upon being hired. Some struggle to afford \$100 work boots. Therefore, the boot fund provides a free, new pair of boots to hired candidates.

This outreach project began with Harvey Blakely's vision to support people, especially young people, entering the trades, manufacturing, and similar careers. Now, Goodwill has awarded its first pair of boots to a recent Goodskills graduate named Dieudonne.

Dieudonne came to the U.S. from the Congo nearly 10 years ago. After dedicating himself to caring for an ill family member, he recently wanted to reenter the workforce.



After struggling to secure long-term employment, he enrolled in the Goodskills program. Shortly after completion, he was offered a position with UPS as a

package handler. But the job would require skid-free specialized boots.

Thanks to the boot fund, he obtained the needed boots. As the first recipient of the boot fund program, he's taken early steps toward career success.

What's Next

Buffalo Toronto Public Media (BTPM) is your local public media station, serving the communities of Western New York and Southern Ontario. As a community-supported alternative to commercial media, they provide the knowledge you need to make informed decisions, access to the arts, and a platform for meaningful dialogue and storytelling.



What's Next is one of BTPM's premier programs, exploring issues that affect marginalized and underrepresented communities in Western New York and Southern Ontario. In the wake of the racist mass shooting in Buffalo on May 14, 2022, the show committed itself to advancing social equity and justice. *What's Next* amplifies voices from across our shared community, highlighting both our individuality and our common ground.

Listen to the one-hour broadcasts Mondays and Wednesdays at 11 a.m. on BTPM NPR (88.7 WBFO), with rebroadcasts on Sundays at 6 p.m. It is also available on demand through their [website](#), the BTPM Listen app, on their [YouTube channel](#), or wherever you get your podcasts.

Listeners are encouraged to join the conversation by using the "Talk to Us" feature in the BTPM Listen app. By using this in-app feature, listeners can send audio recordings directly to the newsroom. You can also reach the production staff by emailing WhatsNext@btpm.org.

The Advocacy and Outreach Committee highly recommends this valuable resource.

Joint Christian Advocacy Summit

Jim Loree, a member of the Advocacy and Outreach Committee of North Presbyterian Church—Williamsville, recently attended the annual Joint Christian Advocacy Summit in Washington, DC.

The three-day Summit, co-sponsored by the PC(USA), began with presentations by individuals with firsthand knowledge of the suffering in Gaza caused by the conflict in the region. A breakout session on Christian Zionism, the theology underpinning the unconditional support by certain American Christians for armed conflict intended to essentially recreate ancient Israel, followed.

The formal program concluded with a presentation on a structured approach to faith-based advocacy on Capitol Hill, culminating the next day with opportunities to meet with lawmakers' legislative staff to advocate for restoring humanitarian aid programs in the Middle East.



Pictured left to right: Br. Jacek Orzechowski, OFM, Natalie Marek, Legislative Director for Representative Timothy Kennedy, and James Loree, JD, MLS, PLC

Interfaith Picnic



In a world full of diverse traditions and beautiful cultures, our shared community is what brings us together. We invite you, your family, and your friends to join us for an afternoon of food, friendship, and fellowship at a Community Interfaith Picnic!

This is a casual space to connect, share stories, and celebrate the rich tapestry of faiths and backgrounds that make our community so vibrant.

Date: Sunday, July 12, 2026
Time: 5 p.m.
Location: North Presbyterian Church
300 North Forest Rd
Williamsville

Please bring a dish to share! To respect everyone's dietary traditions, kindly include a small card listing the ingredients so all guests can safely enjoy the food according to their dietary practices (e.g., Halal, Kosher, Vegetarian, Vegan, Gluten-Free).

Please let us know if you can make it by July 6 so we can plan for space and drinks.

RSVP: n.church.npc@gmail.com or 716-632-1330



by Olivia Ebsary

Sunscreen

Summer officially began on June 21 (the Summer Solstice) and these two weeks on either side are the two most intense weeks in terms of UV exposure. Although the distance from the sun is almost the farthest point, the tilt of the earth is what makes for the warmth and the powerful UV rays...particularly since we are in the Northern hemisphere.

It's a good time to get out the sunscreen and protective clothing and limit your sun exposure to morning before 10 and after 4 pm. There are several kinds of sunscreens. Mineral, usually thicker, has been the safest for sensitive skins reflecting UV rays. Chemical sunscreens absorb UV rays.

The FDA has recently approved a new chemical UV filter for use in sunscreen sold in the US under the name PARSOL, which I see is available on Amazon. I understand dermatologists are cheering their availability now in the US.

Summers are the BEST in Buffalo and safer when you use sunscreen!

Be well, 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 9 am

Chair Yoga Mon/Wed 10 am

Pilates Tues 10:45 am

Classes are free, no registration!

****as schedule can vary, please email oliviaebsary@gmail.com for up-to-date details****

Farm Market at Presbyterian Village



New this summer! A FeedMoreWNY Farm Market is coming to the Presbyterian Village at North Church this summer. Stop by to purchase fresh, healthy, affordable, and locally grown produce. Everything under \$5!

6/9, 6/16, 6/30

7/14, 7/28, 8/11

8/25, 0/9, 9/22

10:00 am – 11:00 am

The Farm Market accepts cash, debit/credit, tap to pay & SNAP/EBT (50% off)!

This 'n That

Congratulations Graduates!

Henry Hutton



Henry Hutton is graduating from Williamsville East High School and plans to attend SUNY Geneseo in the fall to pursue a major in Chemistry Adolescent Education. During high school, Henry has been in two audition required choruses, and has loved the community that they bring. Tennis has also been a big thing in his life. He was on the Varsity Tennis Team at Williamsville East for three years and he loves playing every Sunday after church.

Henry has been an active member of our church community and is grateful for the encouragement, support, and faith that have helped guide him throughout these years. His favorite church memory is going to Montreat for the first time. The memories that he made there will stay with him forever.

Eddie George



Eddie George, grandson of Anselm & Mary Lou George, will graduate this year from Kenmore West High School. He will go on to attend UB in the fall, majoring in Media Study.

Matthew Harrington



Matthew, grandson of Harvey and Marjorie Blakely, is graduating from Williamsville South High School. He will be attending Binghamton University in the fall and majoring in Pure Math as well as continuing on in his love for the orchestra as a cellist.

Sarah Hennessy



Sarah graduated from UB with a Masters in Electrical Engineering. She is currently working at Cannon Design as an Electrical Design Engineer and is pursuing Professional Engineer (PE) Licensure.

Sara Koteras



Sara graduated from Brockport with a degree in Education and her future plan is getting a Master Degree in Special Education at Binghamton University.

Joseph Baudo



Joey graduated this year with his bachelor's in criminology and will be continuing at UB with his master's degree in the UB School of Engineering with the AI Data Sciences department.

Joey started his freshman year in college in NYC at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and in his first semester became very ill. He would have to leave NYC and school and for the next two years struggle with not being able to eat without severe pain, nausea, or vomiting. He was finally diagnosed (severe Gastroparesis) at The Cleveland Clinic in 2022 and was accepted for a surgical procedure in one of their clinical trials. He is still coping with the disease (takes 3 medications daily to allow him to eat) as there is no cure and it makes him graduating this year that much more special.

Daniel McKee



Daniel G. McKee, grandson of Karen McKee, graduated Magna Cum Laude from Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) with a Bachelors of Science, major of Web & Mobile Computing. Daniel will be starting a new job at M&T Bank in July in the IT department.

Kai Harrington



Kai Harrington, granddaughter of Harvey and Marjorie Blakely, is European bound this summer. She is currently residing in Berlin for language studies, and will later perform in an opera in Vienna, Austria. Kai will also be performing in the Buffalo Opera this September. Kai is a sophomore at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester.

Alex McMullen



Alex graduated from the University of Rochester with his PhD in biomedical engineering. He will be staying on at the University of Rochester as a Postdoctoral Researcher. He also will continue his role as Cofounder and Lead Engineer at Portico Health.

Prom!

NPC Youth Group friends Leah Bottorff and Henry Hutton attended Henry's Williamsville East High School senior prom on Friday 6/12/26.



Outdoor Spring Cleanup!

On Saturday, May 16, a group of dedicated gardeners got together and gave the outdoor grounds a much needed spring cleanup! The Memorial Garden is looking great and Joe Alber spent the morning digging out some diseased bushes on the south side of the building in front of the offices in preparation of some new plantings as part of a larger landscape plan.

Welcome to our 2 new gardeners Patti and Ro! Many thanks to everyone for their hard work!





Bingo & Potluck Lunch

On Sunday, June 14, North celebrated the end of the program year with a Bingo and Potluck Lunch event. There was lots of good food, several rounds of Bingo, and even cash prizes! Much fun and fellowship were had by all. Many thanks to the Membership Committee for a fun afternoon!



Looking Ahead

Mark Your Calendars

- July 4 – 4th of July Holiday
- July 12 – Interfaith Picnic 5 pm
- July 22 – Weidner’s Chicken BBQ
- September 7 – Labor Day – **Office Closed**
- September 13 – Return to Regular Schedule:
 - Adult Ed/Bible Study, 9 am;
 - Worship Service 10:30 am
- September 16 – Weidner’s Chicken BBQ
- September 17 – Walk of Abraham



Louise Cooper and her awesome team are busy planning the next opportunity to enjoy a delicious Weidner’s famous chicken BBQ dinner to support the work and mission of North Church.

Please mark your calendars with the following dates!

- Wednesday, July 22**
- Wednesday, September 16**

And while you're jotting down the dates, also think about where you can help. Event coordinators, Louise Cooper and Karen Roesser, are looking for

some helpers! We need ticket sellers, kitchen help, and runners. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Louise, Karen, 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. Thanks for all your help!

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 and we'll do our best to include them in an upcoming edition.

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

Contact Information

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