



North Star

Summer 2025

July / August / September

An e-publication of North Presbyterian Church

From the Pastor's Desk . . .

Summer is supposed to be a time for relaxation and maybe a little reflection. It's not that we stop working during the summer, but often we do get to slow down a little. June has just ended, so we're into summer now, and I'm still waiting for things to slow down. I don't know about you, but I find it hard these days to calm my anxiety. I want to take time to breathe, but my head fills up with all the things I think I should be doing instead. It can be hard to relax when so many concerns keep knocking on my mind. I don't think I'm alone in feeling that way.

If you follow the news, which seems like an odd thing not to do but some people don't, but if you do, you might be finding it hard to find a sense of peace in your life. Between seeing working people living here peacefully being rounded up for deportation and the attempt to end meaningful assistance to poor people, it's hard not to feel anxious. And maybe a little guilty. I haven't fully appreciated what a privilege it is just to take time for fun, just to enjoy the scenery around me. But we have to take the time when we can.

I recommend putting down our phones, or stepping away from our computers and TVs, for at least an hour every day and do something, anything, completely different that gives you a moment of peace. It is a privilege; not everyone in our country is able to do even that right now, but nothing good is

served by exhausting ourselves with anxiety. We need to find ways to refresh and renew ourselves if we want to be of any use to those around us in need.

So, take some time this summer to enjoy your gardens and not just work in them. Or do what one friend (many of you know who) loves to do and "forest bathe." Take a bike ride (my favorite) on country roads or on the trails in town. Just sit outside at night in the cool, still night and listen to the sounds around us. Breathe.... Breathe.... Breathe.

It may sound naïve, but I do find a lot of wisdom in Jesus' words in Matthew: *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? . . . So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."*

All our striving, even when it's for justice on behalf of others, can overwhelm us and keep us from appreciating the moment we have right now. As summer hurtles past us, I hope you can find ways to be in the moment, to be here now.

Peace,

Pastor Bill



Summer Solstice

by Reyne Jankowski

The winter/spring season in Buffalo always seems so long especially when, like this past winter, it was a little harsher than we've experienced in the previous 4 or 5 years. It seems we wait so long for summer to arrive, and those hot summer days and warm summer nights came a little later this year than we would have liked. Here we are a week past the summer solstice, and it seems like a cruel trick of nature that after that first day of summer just when we're starting to enjoy it (and we do so enjoy our summers in Western New York!), the days are already getting shorter!

"Solstice" is a Latin term that means to "stand still"—symbolizing the divine moment where the sun and earth meet each other in stillness.

I think we should take our cue from this definition—let's just enjoy the "stillness" of the summer days ahead, as few as they might be. Take that nap in the hammock. Noodle around in the garden. Sit on the porch or deck and enjoy a cool summer drink. Just sit back, relax, listen...and soak up the stillness.

I love nothing more in the summer than to have a lay-down on my back patio, close my eyes, and just listen and feel the sounds of summer around me—the smell of fresh cut grass, the sound of a lawn mower in the distance, children laughing and playing, birds singing and bees buzzing.

Summer should be the time where we take time out from our busy schedules and relax and enjoy life and the people and nature that surrounds us. Soon enough the days will become cooler and shorter, and we'll pick up our frenetic lives where we left off. But for now, let's all enjoy a cool drink and bask in the stillness.



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Food Pantry Matters

by *Mary Beth Karr*

In April and May, the University Presbyterian Church Food Pantry served 75 to 100 more people than a year ago. The pantry inventory remains strong thanks to North's food donations and the grant-funded programs at FeedMore WNY, from which the pantry receives monthly deliveries.

So far this year, North has donated 51 birthday bags (January), 170 items consisting of rice and canned fruit (March), cereal (April), condiments (May) to the University Presbyterian Church Food Pantry, and haircare items too numerous to count to Haircuts for those in Need (February)!

The University Presbyterian Church Food Pantry also benefits from a retail partnership with Wegmans on Alberta Drive, arranged and delivered by FeedMore.



FeedMore WNY provided the following information about the state and federal food programs that impact FeedMore and its affiliates, including the UPC Food Pantry.

New York State Update

On May 9, 2025, Governor Kathy Hochul signed the New York State budget for fiscal year 2025–2026. Key highlights include:

- Universal Free School Meals: All children across New York State will now receive free school meals.
- Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP): Funding is flat at \$57.8 million.
- Nourish New York: Funding increased to \$55 million, a \$750,000 boost from previous levels.

- Sustained Support: Continued funding for the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program and the Double Up Food Bucks Program.

Federal Update

The U.S. Senate is preparing to vote on budget reconciliation legislation that includes significant cuts to SNAP and Medicaid. The proposed changes to SNAP would:

- Shift a portion of SNAP benefit costs to states.
- Cut federal funding for SNAP administration by 50%.
- Expand work-reporting requirements to include households with school-age children and older adults.
- Eliminate SNAP access for many lawfully present immigrants, including refugees and asylum seekers.
- Reduce benefit amounts by limiting utility deductions and updates to the Thrifty Food Plan, which helps determine benefit levels.

These cuts come at a time when food banks, including FeedMore WNY, are already facing reduced federal support for food purchasing programs.

In April, FeedMore WNY was notified that a key federal funding source for nutritious, American-grown food had been terminated, severely affecting our ability to meet rising food assistance needs.

The USDA confirmed the cancellation of \$500 million in TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) food purchases, previously funded by the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). TEFAP provides essential nutritional support to low-income families.

In 2024, FeedMore WNY received over \$4 million in food through the CCC program. These funds allowed them to purchase proteins, produce, and dairy items, which were distributed to partner pantries, soup

kitchens, and hunger-relief agencies in Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, and Cattaraugus counties.

The immediate impact is significant:

- Twelve pending CCC food deliveries, originally scheduled between May and August 2025, have been canceled. These included truckloads of chicken, turkey, pork, cheese, and eggs.
- The cancellations represent a loss of more than \$3.5 million worth of food this year.
- In 2024, approximately 2.1 million pounds of the 15.8 million pounds distributed by FeedMore WNY came from TEFAP CCC purchases—13% of their total food supply.

These cuts will deeply affect vulnerable community members, including children, older adults, and working families already forced to choose between groceries and other basic needs.

Despite these unprecedented challenges, FeedMore WNY's mission remains steadfast: to provide nutritious food and support to individuals of all ages experiencing hunger. They are committed to serving their network of hunger-relief agencies and working alongside community partners to bring dignity, hope, and brighter futures to our Western New York neighbors in need.

You are invited to sign on to this petition in support of SNAP: [SNAP Cuts Petition](#) or contact your representatives directly by phone.



Property Updates

Nonprofit Security Grant (NPSG) Update

by Joe Alber

Progress is continuing on the security grant. In the Spring North Star it was reported that a Request for Proposal had been sent to a group of local companies and a legal notice published in the Buffalo News seeking proposals for the doors at the end of the two wings. The closing date for receiving the proposals was March 11. Five proposals were received. The Committee reviewed the submissions and selected Aurora Door & Window, LLC. The doors are currently being constructed, and installation is expected sometime in the first half of July.



Another part of the grant is securing all the ground-level windows with an impact resistant film sometimes referred to as "safety" or "security" film. This film is NOT bulletproof, but it doesn't shatter when hit with a blunt instrument and is difficult to break through. After reviewing government specifications and reading industry literature to become familiar with best practices, four local school districts were contacted to inquire whether they had installed film – all had done so. Their practical experience provided helpful guidance that led to identifying local companies that installed film. Precision Glass was selected, and the film was installed throughout the church in May. After the doors at the end of the wings are installed, it is anticipated that the film will also be applied to both the doors and sidelights.

Work has started on the last phase of the grant. This involves strategically placing crash barriers to prevent someone from driving a vehicle through any of the doors to gain entrance to the building. Various solutions are being investigated to provide effective and attractive ways to safeguard against this risk. It

is anticipated that this work will be completed by early fall.

Finally, the Committee believes this is a good time to enhance the appearance of the church by addressing the landscaping, especially the areas around the Southside entrance and the signage along North Forest Avenue. Please note this will not be covered by the grant, so any cost for enhancing the landscape must be borne by the church. More about that later.

If you have any questions about the grant, please don't hesitate to ask any of the committee members: Joe Alber, Randy Bigler, Livy Ebsary, Reyne Jankowski and Pastor Hennessy.

P.S. At the successful conclusion of the grant a "formal" safety committee will be formed. It is hoped that when the call goes out seeking members, there will be individuals who will step forward to serve. The ability of the grant to achieve its intended purpose depends on the active participation of the congregation.

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!

Mission in Action

Dress A Girl

After our cupboards were emptied in January, the dedicated sewing ladies got right back to their machines to create dresses for the next request. The doll-making ladies worked to keep up the creation of the little yarn dolls to accompany the dresses.



At our May meeting we were able to pack up 67 dresses for little girls and yarn dolls to go with them. These items were delivered to Life Church Buffalo, a non-denominational church in West Seneca. The dresses will go to Mexico and the Dominican Republic in June and July. They are part of the mission work of Life Church Buffalo.

Although we won't officially meet again until late September, many of the women involved have collected supplies from our stash and will continue to work over the summer in anticipation of the need that is always there. We already know that the school in Ghana will be happy to receive as many dresses as we can supply.

Dress A Girl has been part of North Church's mission effort for more than 15 years. About half of the participants are friends and family of church members or others who have heard of the work. We have formed quite a bond with participants and each month we share a lunch and work together all

afternoon. If you have an interest in sewing or hand crafts, feel free to stop by and share the joy. (We meet mostly on the fourth Tuesday of the month 12-4 pm. Check the calendar.)

Advocacy and Outreach

Advocacy and Outreach thanks the congregation for their continued outpouring of financial support for those in need in the world.

We received a letter of thanks from Family Promise who received \$5,000 as part of our Christmas offering.

Our One Great Hour of Sharing offering of \$4,586 was sent to PCUSA for the Presbyterian Mission Agency.



Our portion of the Pentecost Offering (\$1,062) will be sent to Peace of the City on Buffalo's west side. They advocate for teens at risk, encouraging and supporting them in many ways. Asia Hall and her lovely family worshipped with us on June 8.

She spoke about their programs and sent a follow up email, inviting our congregation to upcoming events and fund raisers. More specifics will be upcoming.

A&O continues to monitor the situation regarding immigrants in Buffalo. We will keep you informed about any important updates or developments as they happen.



by Olivia Ebsary

Leg Strength

I tell my classes all the time...Your leg muscles are the "**Muscles of Independence**" Squats and other exercises will strengthen this muscle group from the

lower body. For many reasons they are crucial to longevity and independence. Let me count the ways!!

1. Strong legs are actually linked to better brain function and a reduced risk of cognitive decline. They improve circulation and blood flow to the brain areas involved in memory and learning.
2. Reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Increased leg strength is correlated with lowering the risk of chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension.
3. Improved mobility and independence and here's why I call them the "Muscles of Independence". They help with **ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING** as we age, like walking, climbing stairs, balance, getting in and out of the car and off of the toilet!
4. Heart Health! Of course, all exercises can improve heart function and lungs reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and help to maintain weight and blood sugar, but leg muscles are some of the largest muscle group and they require lots of oxygen (from your lungs) and blood (from your heart) to function well.
5. Bone strength. Weight bearing exercises like squats and lunges stimulate bone growth and improve conditions like osteoporosis.
6. Faster recovery from surgery, illness and injury...Bingo! As we age, this is soooo important and I see good results from my class members who are remaining active.
7. Reduced risk of falls....which is the leading cause of injury among adults. Strong legs and core can improve balance and thus reduce the risk of falls and fractures.

Get walking, get exercising, get moving and get going –your future self will thank you.

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***

This 'n That

Congratulations Graduates!

Ryan Koteras



Ryan Koteras is graduating from Amherst Central High School. He will be attending the University of Buffalo for Computer Science.

Dominic Carlins



Dominic Carlins graduated from Williamsville North High School. He is attending St. Bonaventure University in the fall to study Marketing and Sports Management.

Erin Parker



Erin Parker is graduating from Williamsville North HS. She is attending SUNY ERIE where she has signed on to join their volleyball team as a starter and to study nursing. Her hopes and dreams are to become an emergency room nurse practitioner. She would like to thank everyone through her journey so far including her family and her church family.

New Arrival!

Aaron & Emily Sprague welcomed a new baby this spring. Micah Reed Sprague was born on May 28. Proud grandparents are Jim & Diane Sprague.



Micah with big sister, McKenna

Sunday School Spruces Up the Church Grounds!

The Parable of the Sower



Planting geraniums around the Peace Pole

Earth Day Clean-up and Easter Egg Hunt



Looking Ahead

Mark Your Calendars

July 4 – 4th of July Holiday– ***Office Closed***

July 16 – Weidner's Chicken BBQ

August 7 – CPR/AED Training Class

September 1 – Labor Day – ***Office Closed***

September 14 – Return to Regular Schedule: Adult Ed/Bible Study, 9 am; Worship Service 10:30 am

September 17 – Weidner's Chicken BBQ

September 18 – Walk of Abraham



Louise Cooper is 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 16

Wednesday, September 17

And while you're jotting down the dates, also think about where you can help. Event coordinator, Louise Cooper, is looking for some helpers! We need ticket sellers, kitchen help, and runners. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Louise 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!



Hazel Denecke playing in middle school All-County Band for her second year



Jacob Denecke helping with rescue dogs through 716 paws, animal rescue that Pam Ostermeier helps by fostering rescues



Linus Denecke receiving his National Junior Honor Society membership

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

300 North Forest Rd., Williamsville, NY 14221
(716) 632-1330

Office Hours: M-Th: 8:00 am-3:00 pm

www.northchurchwilliamsville.org

E-mail: n.church.npc@gmail.com