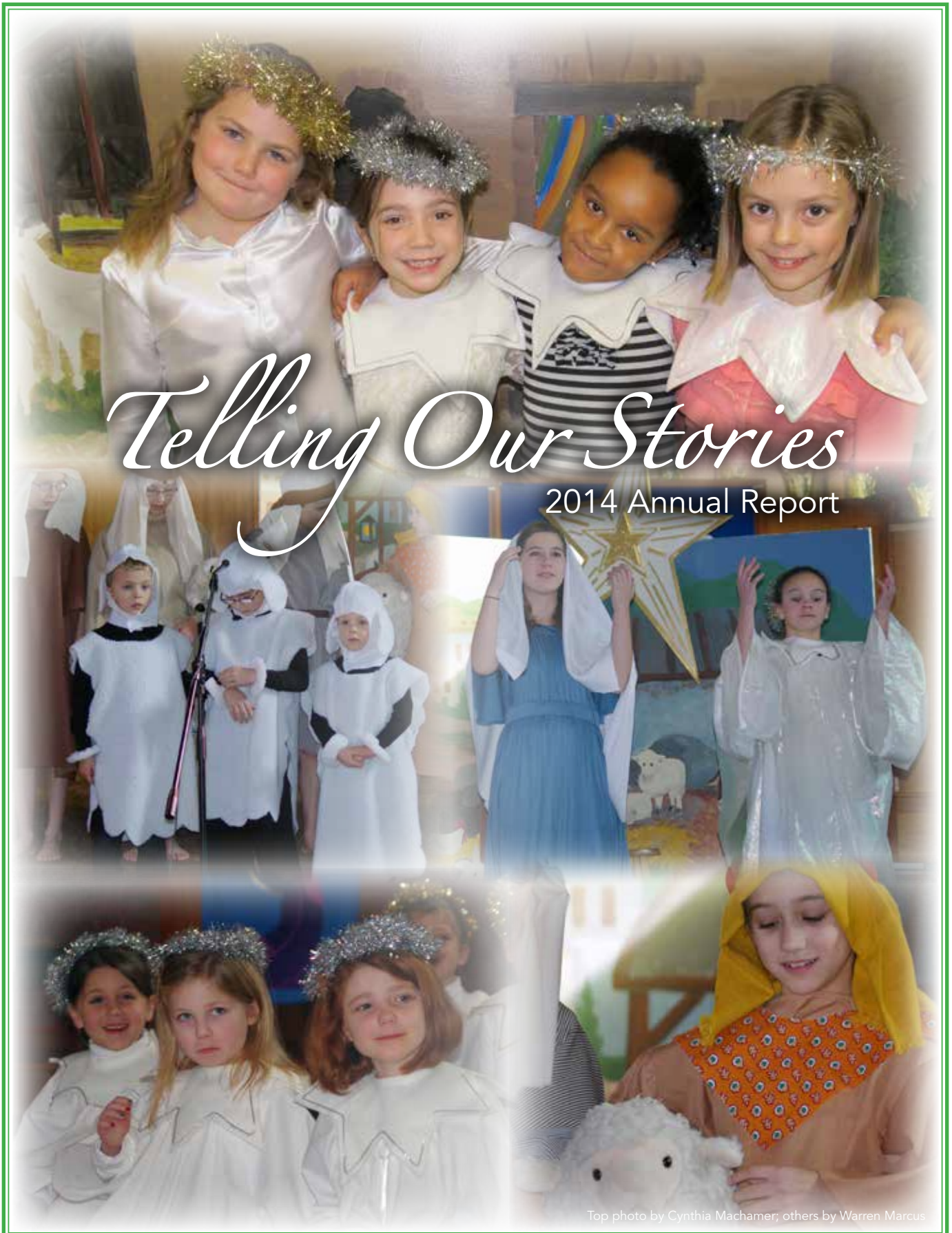


North Presbyterian Church



Telling Our Stories

2014 Annual Report

Top photo by Cynthia Machamer; others by Warren Marcus

Children's Christmas pageants have been a mainstay at North Church for more than 30 years. Director Marty Shafer has led the productions since 1985 and says, "What a wonderful, long-lasting memory it is for all the children growing up in the church."

To the Community of North Church,

You hold in your hands a collection of stories that represent the breadth of ministry our community has practiced over the last year. This isn't everything we do; it's just a snapshot of our life together. The people who make up North Church are committed to making a difference in the world. We want our efforts to have an impact that will improve the lives of those around us and will deepen our own experience of God's presence through acts of love and compassion.

We believe our relationship with Christ frees us to open our hearts and our arms in a welcoming embrace that is fully inclusive and affirming of every sister and brother who longs to draw closer to God. We're a community that is intellectually curious, theologically diverse and spiritually open. I hope you find those values reflected in this collection of vignettes, and I hope you are encouraged to seek a life of meaningful, relevant ministry among us.

In the words of Ephesians, "I pray that you may have the power to comprehend...what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:18-19)

Peace,

Bill Hennessy, Pastor and Head of Staff

“See You Next Month”

By Carol Meyers



There is a man who often comes to the Urban Diner. He sits by himself and speaks to no one. Last month I did check-in. You stand outside the diner at a desk and check the people in. They give their ZIP code and then can go in and sit where they like. The man I am talking about gave me his ZIP code and walked into the dining room. I said, “Have a nice dinner.” He turned and gave me a look. Later, when he came out, I was still standing there. I said, “Have a nice evening.” I got that look again.

When he reached the door, he turned around, walked back to me, and said, “Thanks for telling me to have a nice evening. I know you mean it.” I said that yes, I did. He walked to the door again, raised his arm and said, “See you next month.”

A social worker, who was standing nearby and had heard the exchange, came over to me and said, “How did you get that man to talk to you? He does not talk to anyone!” I said, “God helped me.” He said, “He surely did.”

Carol Meyers began going to the Urban Diner (affiliated with Friends of Night People), which is located on the east side of Buffalo, more than two years ago when she was on the Board of Deacons. She says she serves because “I enjoy it, and I have been given much and I think as Christians we need to help however we can, those who are struggling. At North we are given opportunities to serve and help others.”

Madison and Company

By Madison Kahler

Why did I spend a week of my summer vacation with more than 50 rambunctious children?

Although it seems so long ago, it was just six months ago—from Aug.18-21—that we enjoyed Vacation Bible School (VBS) at North Church. I'm Madison Kahler, I am 15 years' old, and I chaired this year's VBS.



We—my mom and I and the countless other volunteers--enjoyed the company of about 60 children, from pre-k to 5th grade, for four days in August. The campers "visited" different stations—crafts, Bible, snack, music, and recreation—where they learned how to share God's message of love through fun activities.

This year we also included a mission project in which the kids brought in canned food and money. All the food was donated to Western New York Food Bank. The money raised went to its Backpack Program where kids who don't have enough to eat on the weekends receive nutritious food.

We all had a wonderful week. It was tiring, and a lot of work, but I spent a week of my summer vacation this way because when I was little I liked VBS. I wanted to do this because North Church is like a family to me.

Madison (center in photo) says she enjoys missions trips, sharing with other people, and appreciates that North Church is a place where she has been able to grow in her faith.

“We are all ministers of North Church”

By Duncan Hemink



Serving as a liturgist during worship has led me to a deeper faith... North Church has always valued the role of lay leadership in Sunday services. Lay leadership has a very important role in our worship, and reinforces the notion, to me, in a much greater sense, that we are all ministers of North Church. You will note the last page of the bulletin, where the ministers of North Church are identified as the congregation. The shared leadership role on Sunday mornings, therefore, can be viewed as a model that calls each one of us to depart from here after worship, with a shared charge, to be ministers to our community and to the world.

Isaiah 58:9-11 suggests, to me, our generosity to our sisters and brothers in their time of need is a manifestation of God working in us and through us, and

through generous actions, we will be led to a brighter day: “...If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you will be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.”

Duncan spoke to the congregation during Generosity Month, in November 2014. “For North Church, compassion is more than a sentimental feeling; gratitude is more than thankfulness. North’s actions change people’s lives,” he said.

The House with the Purple Door

By JoAnne Alderfer and Sue D'Angelo



She sits quietly in the living room, fidgeting with her keys. Scared, hurt, and confused, many thoughts race through her head: “How did it come to this? He was so charming and nice when I met him? Why does he hurt me? What should I do? Should I stay? Should I leave?”

She's a young stay-at-home mother. She's an attorney with a successful practice. She's a retired school teacher. She is your friend, your co-worker, your neighbor, your daughter. She is black, she is white, she is Christian, she is Muslim, she is rich, and she is poor. She is the victim of domestic violence.

When a person (male or female) in need comes to the Family Justice Center (FJC) Northtowns Satellite, which is located next to North Presbyterian Church—which was the former manse—he or she is greeted by a staff member who briefly assesses the situation.

The client is then taken into one of our living rooms by a volunteer who makes her comfortable, offering her coffee and a snack. The “intake interview” is then conducted by one of the volunteers. Demographic information and details of the abusive situation are gathered, after which the client is informed of all the services that are available. It may be shelter, counseling for her or her children, social services, legal services, or spiritual counseling. An FJC advocate then helps the client through the process of counseling regarding a safety plan, writing an order of protection, if appropriate, and making other referrals, as needed.

This scenario has now played out 70 times since the FJC Northtowns Satellite opened its doors in February 2014. We have had clients from all over Erie County and also some from Niagara County. The needs of the people we serve are great, and each client comes with a unique story. She has lost control of her life, and our responsibility is to help her regain some of that control and to learn to believe once again that she is worthy of safety and peace.

What makes this possible is our dedicated group of volunteers and professional staff who continue to provide much needed support to the victims of domestic violence. We are grateful for the support we have received from North Church, not only for agreeing to provide the space for the satellite, but also for the hours of work that were provided to create such a beautiful and safe space for our clients. We are also grateful for all the community support we have received from coalition churches and the ongoing support we receive daily from many and various individuals and organizations.

A Time of Renewal

North Church ushered in its formal period of renewal on May 31, 2014, with singing. Yes, singing! More than 150 people from North, across the region, and even from Canada attended Rev. John Bell's workshops on congregational singing and Celtic spirituality. Rev. Bell, a composer and an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland, encouraged us to include a Capella singing in our worship services. Dividing the attendees into groups, he helped us practice spirited congregational singing. Bell shared many stories of the songs' histories and uses. He also educated us on Celtic spiritual traditions, including the themes of nature and creation.



On Sunday, June 1, 2014, Rev. John Bell (left) preached at our worship service, when we sent Pastor Bill Hennessy off for three months of his own renewal time and welcomed Rev. Dr. Gary Percesepe (center) as our summer supply pastor. (Photo by Warren Marcus)

immigrated to Buffalo in March 2014 with his family. Gary and Rami discussed how Jesus instructed us to love those with whom we disagree, even in war-torn nations like Iraq and among widely separated peoples. North hosted a Forum on Iraq in August. Alex Ebsary, director of public affairs for the Kurdish Regional Government in Washington, DC, described the complex geopolitical environment in the Kurdistan region, where he lived for several years. Rami spoke about his refugee experience and the plight of displaced families in Syria and Iraq.

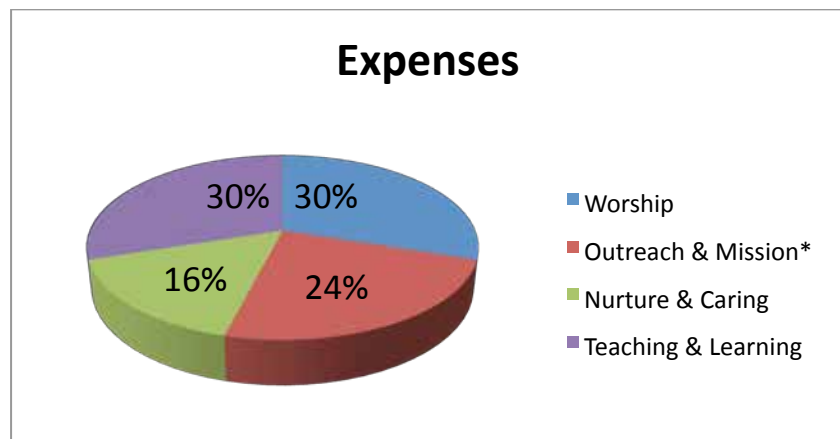
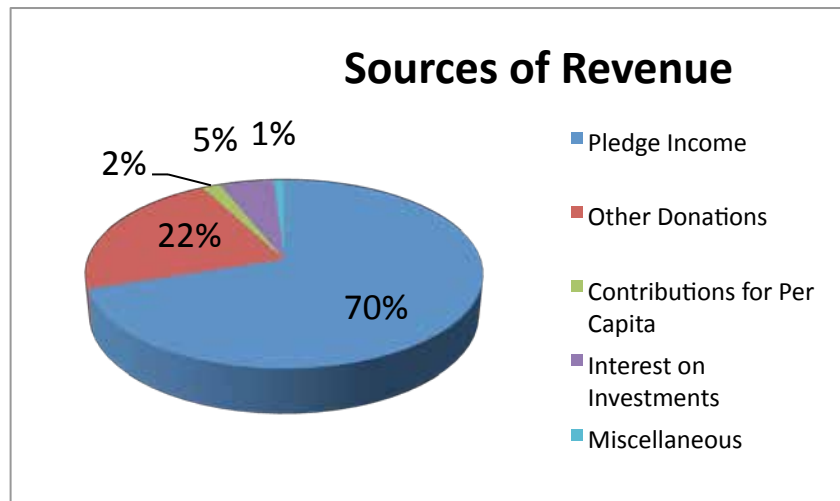
At the end of August, we said farewell to Pastor Gary. At Sunday worship, the Adult Choir sang John Bell's anthem *Journey Prayers*, which they had also sung prior to Pastor Bill Hennessy's departure in June. On September 1, we welcomed Pastor Bill back from his renewal time. Like Pastor Gary's summer salary, Pastor Bill's renewal activities in Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Amherst and a New York monastery were underwritten by the Clergy Renewal Grant. The renewal time coincided with Pastor Bill's 25th anniversary in ordained ministry. Our welcome home celebration included a luncheon complete with a traditional Irish band.

Rev. Bell's visit and other summer activities were fully underwritten by a \$50,000 Clergy Renewal Grant North Church received from the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. and administered by Christian Theological Seminary. North was blessed to be one of 87 churches selected in 2013 for 2014-2015 Lilly funding.

Thanks to the creative leadership of the Worship Committee and Rev. Gary Percesepe, we experienced spirited summer services, including dance, song, colors, nature and "noisy offerings." Themes included peacemaking, race relations, Taize prayer and silence. At our traditional outdoor summer service, Rev. Percesepe presented a dialogue sermon with Rev. Rami Al Maqdasi, a Presbyterian pastor from Iraq who

Mission Statement

Brought together by our shared faith in Jesus Christ,
Called by God to live as faithful disciples,
Blessed by our diverse gifts and experiences,
We commit ourselves to **worship** together,
Teach and **learn** from one another,
Nurture each other with care and love, and
Reach out in **ministry** and **mission** to the world.



*Through Special Offerings and projects, North Church gave an additional \$26,000 in special mission giving.

Ministers: The Congregation

Pastor/Head of Staff: The Rev. William T. Hennessy
Director of Youth, Children & Family Ministry: Peter Martin
Administrative Assistant: Cynthia Machamer
Directors of Music, Organists: Marlene Harrington/Carole Harris
Childcare Supervisor: Regina Koteras
Director of Music, Children & Youth: Marty Shafer

Director of Sacred Dance: Olivia Ebsary
Facilities Coordinator: Mike Callaghan
Artist-in-Residence: Mary Mohlke
Webmaster: Tara Martin
Bookkeeper: Judy Blackchief