

Looking Back, Moving Forward

North Presbyterian Church/*annual report 2015*

A Year of Transition

2015 was a year of transition for North Church. After five and a half years working with our children and youth, Peter Martin received a call to serve as pastor of a congregation in Norristown, PA. His departure has left a significant gap in our programming that is not easily filled. Currently we are in the process of seeking a shared Youth Director with University Presbyterian Church so we can get back to more regular programming for our 7th to 12th grade youth.

We are also seeking a part-time coordinator to work with our younger kids (grades 4, 5 and 6) and to oversee the Church School program. In the meantime, we have volunteers who are providing leadership for Church School and partnering with other Presbyterian churches for activities for our older youth, which include retreats at Duffield, mission work at St. Luke's Mission of Mercy and gatherings for fun at other area churches.

Another transition we're going through is seeking more creative uses of our

building as a source of income and as a way of serving the community. We have a wonderful facility that is sadly underused. As a way of becoming a more welcoming, hospitable place we're inviting more and more groups to take advantage of what we can offer.

One example of that is the four-week Course in Mindfulness that was held in the Chapel during October and November. A second course has already been scheduled, and folks who have never set foot in our building, perhaps had no idea we are here, are finding it to be a place of warmth and welcome.

As we look forward to 2016, there are some financial and programmatic challenges we need to meet. That's true every year. It's part of being an



In 2015 we celebrated 60 years in Williamsville—here 10-year-old Lynn Prior and Elder Edward O. Thorpe are shown helping to lay the cornerstone at our current location on June 5, 1955. Our continued goal in 2016 is to “become more open to the activity of the Spirit in and among us.”

organization in the community. What's unique about us is the commitment we share to our life together. We're here, certainly, to serve our community, but we're also here to be a source of encouragement and support for one another. We're here to experience the love of God in Christ through acts of compassion and generosity with one another and any who come through our doors.

The real transition at North is the transformation of our hearts and minds as each day we are molded more and more in the image of Christ. If there is any goal to move toward in 2016 let it be to become more open to the activity of the Spirit in and among us so that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us.

Blessings and peace in this New Year,

Pastor Bill

A History Worth Celebrating

Where North currently sits—300 N. Forest Rd., Williamsville—is the third home of the congregation. In fact, December marked 60 years that the church has been in Amherst.

To celebrate, the church planned several events. In June, we kicked off the anniversary celebration in both Sunday morning worship services. The hymn *Let Us Build a House* and Pastor Bill's sermon, "The House We're Building," helped folks remember Who builds the church.

In July folks from North participated in the five-mile solidarity **Walk of Abraham** with

other congregations, the Islamic Society of Niagara Frontier, and Congregation Havarah; the fundraiser **Walk Off Hunger**; and we invited the community to our first ever **cruise night/bake sale/face-painting** event for the whole family (see story below).

We were pleased when the local paper, *The Amherst Bee*, took note of our activities. A large article on July 1, 2015, highlighted some of the church's ministries like Dress-a-Girl and turkey baskets. At the end of September, the paper printed a photo of some North folks working on a retaining wall at the Amherst Youth &

Family Center, on Service Sunday. (See story below.)

In the fall, we recognized longtime members near and far during Homecoming Sunday on October 4, 2015. The Rev. Bronwen Boswell—interim associate pastor at North from 1999-2001—brought her message "Spanning Time."

We concluded our anniversary celebration on December 6, the second Sunday of Advent, with a special litany of renewal of dedication.

Service Sunday Benefits Local Community

Service Sunday on September 27 brought together more than 100 folks from North Church and friends from other area churches. Together we partnered with organizations like Willow Lodge at the VA Center, Amherst State Park, and the Family Justice Center to clean, build, and renew physical spaces as well as create new friendships and nurture established ones.

"This was an amazing chance to give back to our community, but more importantly, it

was a chance to live out Christ's love outside the walls of our church," said Jeff Faunce.

We met together for breakfast and brief worship, went out to work sites for two hours, then came back together for lunch and brief worship. People of all ages participated. The generosity of many enabled North to reach out in ministry to our neighbors. Many have expressed a desire to do this kind of service day again in

"Participating in Service Sunday was one of our favorite memories from 2015. We made new friends...all who helped us paint and prep our new apartment homes. Thank you!"
—Jenna Bichler, Presbyterian Village at North Church, Williamsville

Hot Cars and a Fire Truck

What do Mustangs, a fire truck and baked goods have to do with the mission of North Church? Plenty! On July 15, 2015, we had a first-of-its-kind "**community party**" with a Mustang and Corvette cruise, a face-painting station for kids of all ages, a live DJ, a mini Zumba class, a food truck, and a pumper truck from the Snyder Fire Department.

"The face painting was a big hit with the

kids," said Chris Gunther, who brought her grandchildren, Max and Emily. "I loved the fire truck. I thought this event was well planned and a great beginning to an annual event."

Besides North Church folks, people from the surrounding community came. The weather was perfect, the mood of the crowd was festive, and as a church, together we enjoyed reaching out to our neighbors in a spirit of friendship. That fits perfectly with our mission.



"We were so happy to participate," said Tim Oliver, second assistant chief of the Snyder Fire Department. "It is always great to talk about the work we do as firefighters."



Betty Bowling: young at heart

ber. Confirmed at age 12 in 1930, Betty will be 98 years old next month. With her parents she moved to Buffalo from Rhode Island. They picked North Church to attend, which was then located in Buffalo at Delaware and Utica. Betty remembers Rev. Martyn Keeler, and many other pastors that subsequently served North Presbyterian Church through the years.

When asked if she had a favorite minister, she smiled and said, "No, they were all nice." Betty remembers when the church

was sold in 1952 and the congregation began meeting the next year at Park School on Harlem Road.

Betty is the mother of five grown sons, and she has 11 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Photos of her loved ones line her walls at the retirement home where she spends her days, busy with a multitude of classes such as fitness and history. She stays busy and enjoys getting to North Church when she can and staying in touch with friends.

According to our records, Betty Bowling may be our oldest living mem-

Nurturing Each Other with Care

As a congregation, we experienced joys and sorrows in 2015. Through it all we sought to live as "followers of Jesus called together in faith, hope, and love." (This is a very small sampling of the life of North Church.)

January

18/Baby Baptism: Emerson Alber Miller

21/Improvisation Workshop with Drew Ludwig, pastor of Lafayette Presbyterian Church

February

15 /Worship services cancelled due to severe winter weather

April

13/Session blesses & supports Pastor Hennesy using the same criteria for same-sex marriages as he currently uses for heterosexual marriages.

26/Baby Baptism: Noah Hunter Davis

May

17/Send off for Peter Martin, director of youth, children & family ministry, who accepted a call to First Presbyterian Church in Norristown, Pa.

31/Three youth confirmed: Scott Brown, Joshua Fronczak, and Sam Schultz

June

7/Celebration: Laying of the Cornerstone

13/Casey Bigler-Michael Kelley wedding

14/Kyle Cowan baptism

July

10/Nick & Emily Hopkins's wedding

15/Car show/bake sale/Snyder fire truck event

August

16/Lisa Emily born to Rami Al Maqdasi & Raya Jarjees Al Maqdasi

September

27/Service Sunday

October

4/Welcome Home Sunday

November

1/Josephine Ann born to Alanna & Chris Carlins

22/Turkey Basket distribution: 31 years and counting!

December

19/Kreppel-Clore wedding

20/Christmas Pageant: 30 years and counting!

In 2015, we welcomed 14 people who formally joined North Presbyterian Church as members.

We mourned the loss of 14 people as well. Services for the eight people listed below were held at North Church:

February: Yvonne Hodson

May: Bill Everett, Kay Timmerman,

and Norma Reyder

July: Jeff Weaver

October: Evelyn Marchyn

November: Mary Mohlke and Art Griebner

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Elders (Session)

Clerk of Session: Sylvia Bigler

Class of 2016

Sue D'Angelo
Jeff Ebsary
Linda Gowans
Brad Hahn
Kaitlyn Khayat

Class of 2017

Neil Arnold
Wendy Ayler
Lee Broad
Chad Kahler
Diane Sprague

Elders (continued)

Class of 2018

Joe Alber
Ralph Doerzbacher
Bill Ervin
Carol Meyers

Board of Deacons

Moderator: Glenn Hopkins

Class of 2016

Kerri Bigler
Karen Hopkins
Jo Yorko
Sheridan Skura

Class of 2017

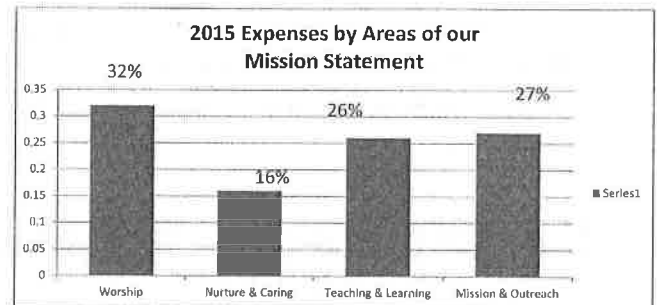
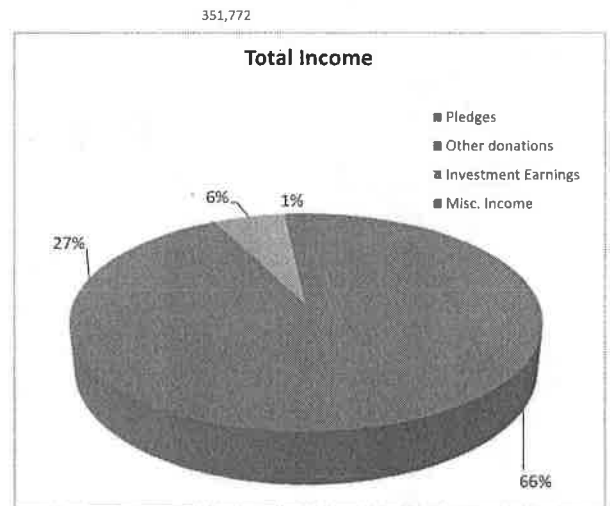
Mary Atwood
Cynthia Ebsary
Olivia Ebsary

Class of 2018

Glenn Hopkins
Viki Komjathy
Warren Marcus
Shirley Mazourek

Pledges	231,119	66%
Other donations	94,641	27%
Investment Earnings	20,105	6%
Misc. Income	5,907	2%

Total Income



Supporting "Angels" through North Church



"Angels" like these continue to delight us with their retelling of the story of Christ's birth each year through the pageant. (Photo by Warren Marcus)

many offerings, and offered your time and talents to make this place and this world a much brighter place.

Space limits our ability to mention all the other ways you make a difference—in big ways and small. But we are grateful for all of you, near and far.

We hope in 2016 you will choose to continue to support "angels" like those who participate in the pageant every year, those who supervise critical ministries, and the "angels" we don't hear much about. Every act of kindness and love matters. When given through North Presbyterian Church, you can be assured your gift is safe and secure and will go where you intend.

THANK YOU for remembering North Church in 2016.

Ways to Give Now

- * Cash or check.
- * Checks authorized through your online banking.
- * Online gifts by credit card or ACH. Click the Donate button on North's website.
- * Gifts of appreciated stock.
- * IRA charitable rollover.
- * By including North in your will.

If you have questions, please call the church office at 716-632-1330.

THANK YOU for all the ways you have supported North Presbyterian Church in 2015. You have donated food for the Turkey Basket Project, given financially to