

# North Star

An e-publication of North Presbyterian Church, 300 N. Forest Rd., Williamsville, NY

December 2017, January-February, 2018 716-632-1330 n.church@verizon.net www.northchurchwilliamsville.org

## Where Is Christmas in the Parties and Planning?

Christmas is fast approaching and with it our lives are becoming more and more hectic. It's hard to slow down and reflect on what this celebration really means. Too often we get caught up in the parties and planning, a more cultural observance, or we fall into a sort of childlike emphasis, a "birthday for Jesus" or "Jesus is the reason for the season," without really considering the deeper meaning of incarnation.

The stories of Jesus' birth recounted in Matthew and Luke are intended, I think, as metaphors for incarnation and not as historical accounts. Last January when I visited Israel we spent an afternoon in Bethlehem, just a few miles from Jerusalem, and

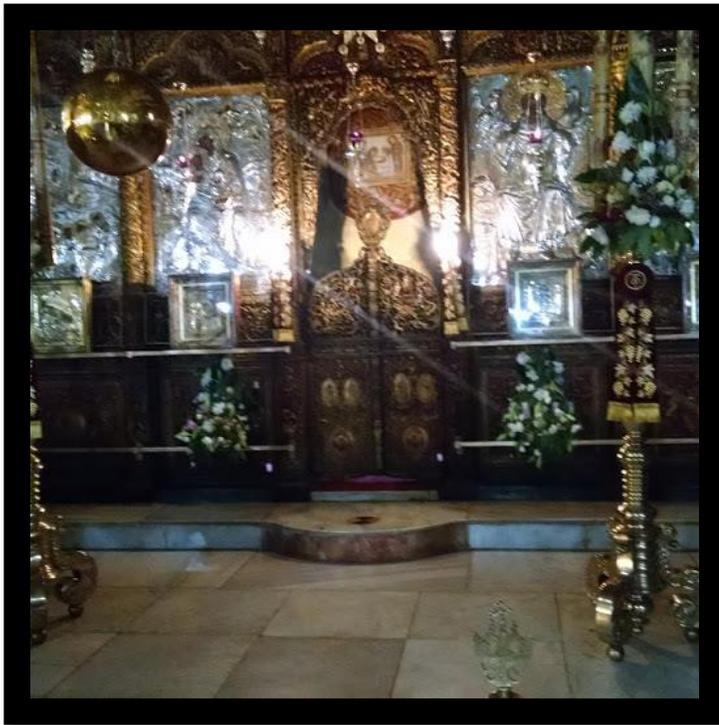
visited the famous Church of the Nativity. It had been commissioned originally, we were told, by Helena the mother of Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. No one knows, really, where the writer of Luke's gospel intended to locate the inn and stable described or if that writer had ever actually been to



Church of the Nativity

Bethlehem at all. Nevertheless, the Church, a shrine to the Nativity, stands on a site in the middle of town where pilgrims flock all year round to peer into the little grotto that's been excavated there to see what the place might have looked like.

The Church was under renovation while we were there. It's currently occupied by, I believe, three Christian groups: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian Apostolic. There is no Protestant presence at any of the shrines we visited in the Holy Land. But there are lots of shrines



*One of several shrines within the church*

dedicated to places and stories described in the gospels. There is a desire to make these stories, like the story of Jesus' birth, concrete and tangible. But the incarnation is in many ways, paradoxically, an intangible reality.

In Matthew's gospel, when an angel visits Joseph in a dream, Joseph is told the child Mary is carrying will be "Emmanuel."

This birth demonstrates the reality of Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus' birth doesn't *cause* God to be with us, but *affirms* God with us. That may seem like a very minor distinction, but it's



*Original floor tile preserved from the 4<sup>th</sup> century*

extremely important. Julian of Norwich, the 14<sup>th</sup>-century mystic,

wrote, "We are not only made by God; we are made of God." Celtic Christian spirituality holds that creation itself is God's first incarnation. So incarnation is a reality before Jesus' birth. This tells us no one, no form of matter in the cosmos, is beyond the reach of God's presence. As Elizabeth Barrett Browning once wrote, "Earth's crammed with heaven!"

Christmas celebrates that amazing truth. We are crammed with God through and through. Our life, the whole creation, is Emmanuel. Once we see that in ourselves, we can begin to see it all around us and give thanks for it all.

May you have a joyful, peaceful, and merry Christmas this season and throughout the coming year!

*Pastor Bill*



## Christmas Pageant 2017 Teaches Us Who Belongs in the Kingdom

*The Inn Crowd: A Christmas Musical* by Lee Dengler and Susan Naus Dengler, will be presented on Sunday, December 17, at 10:00 a.m. AND 4:00 p.m. The infamous census of the ages has made Bethlehem a busy and crowded spot, and there are some guests at a local inn who aren't very happy. F.W. Woolworth (a rich wool salesman) and Rock Starling (a hip star singer), among others, have made it clear that they want no part of the "lower class" staying in the inn. By the end of this musical, we learn who Jesus came to save and who is included in His kingdom.

Alanna Carlins became the new Children's & Youth Choir director beginning October 1, 2017. Marty Shafer retired in May 2017 after having served at North for more than 30 years. If you have any questions, please contact the director at [alannaloren@yahoo.com](mailto:alannaloren@yahoo.com).



## Poinsettias Honor Loved Ones

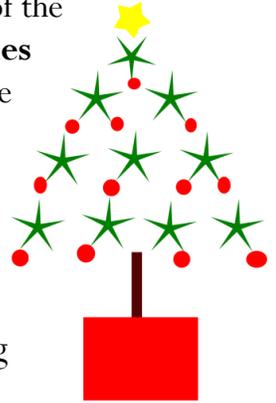
This time of year is a wonderful time to remember someone you love

with a beautiful plant—and it helps North Church make the sanctuary, chapel and Dickinson Room beautiful for the holidays. If you would like to honor, celebrate or memorialize a loved one, simply fill out a form at church. If you're not in the area or can't get to us, call or e-mail and we'll be happy to take down the information for you: 716-632-1330 or [n.church@verizon.net](mailto:n.church@verizon.net). Plants are still only \$10 each.

## Giving Tree

You will find our decorated Giving Tree in the Dickinson Room. This North Church Advent tradition is one of the ways we help bring joy to families in need during the holiday season.

This year we have selected two of the recently arrived **refugee families** that North Church members have been assisting. The family of five from Eritrea had to move apartments after a fire but the girls are adjusting nicely to new schools and are receiving some special educational tutoring from NPC members. The other family arrived from Iraq to join family members in Buffalo. They are learning English and finding jobs. They sometimes attend Sunday services with us.



We will again be supporting the **Homespace** program, which provides a safe transitional living environment with supportive services for single-parent families in the foster care system.

If you would like to take part in this project, please select a tag from the tree and sign it out so we know that all items are accounted for. A member of the Mission Committee will be there to assist you.

Gifts should be wrapped with the gift tag attached and returned to the church no later than Sunday, **December 17**. Enclosing a gift receipt makes it convenient for the recipient.

If shopping is not your thing, we can do some of it for you. Some items have already been purchased; you can simply reimburse the Mission Committee to be the donor. If you prefer to give a monetary donation, we will apply it toward purchase of some of the items. Thank you for helping to make the Christmas season special for families in our community.

## Christmas Offering

The Mission Committee is happy to announce our choices for the 2017 Christmas Offering. Once again the offering will be divided between one local and one other organization. Both agencies that we have chosen work on our behalf to care for the many people in our community and world who need humanitarian assistance.

The local agency is **Gerard Place**, a transitional home for homeless, single-parent families. Gerard Place has been working in Buffalo's east side neighborhoods since 2000 providing housing, education, vocational training, counseling, and classes in life skills. More than 90 percent of residents have transitioned to independent housing and have not returned to homelessness. The Gerard Place Community Center will soon add job readiness training and quality childcare to the neighborhood. Our contributions will help empower individuals and families toward self-sufficiency. They have a very ambitious program and you can read more about it at <https://gerardplace.org>

The second organization sharing our Christmas Offering is **One America Appeal**, the hurricane relief agency set up by the five living past presidents. Our portion of the collection will be designated to assist our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico. One hundred percent of moneys donated to One America Appeal are passed on to local agencies for distribution. In Puerto Rico the distribution agency is **Unidos Por Puerto Rico (United for Puerto Rico)**, a private non-profit with a mission to aid individual and small businesses devastated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria by assisting with housing, food, and health needs. Their goal is rebuilding lives and communities in Puerto Rico.

**United for Puerto Rico** reviews grant applications from local non-profits and selects recipients. As of Nov. 3, they have distributed a total of \$1,598,944 for such projects as home rebuilding, zinc roofs, tarp repair kits, preparation of hot meals, transportation to doctors' appointments, and a mobile clinic for medical emergencies. They assist with distribution of nonperishable goods; so far more than 75,000 items (mostly water, clothing, and food) have been delivered to those in need.

There is no need to repeat the statistics here; we have all seen them. These hurricanes were exceptionally catastrophic. It will take years and billions of dollars to do what needs to be done. All donations, no matter the size, make a difference. We are all pulled in many directions this time of year and we ask you to carefully consider how you will respond to this request at Christmastime; keeping in mind the true meaning of the season will surely help. We thank you for your past generosity.

## Update on One America Appeal Special Collection

On September 24, in a special collection, we requested support for hurricane victims. The response was heart-warming; we were able to send \$3525 to the One America Appeal, the charity set up by past Presidents that funnels 100 percent of donations to local organizations in affected areas. Local agencies in turn fund grants for projects, a sample of which we list below.

The **Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund**, for example, has supported the opening of the new *Avenue Housing Recovery Center* on Houston's north side. The 4,000-square-foot center will offer education and counseling for people rebuilding after Hurricane Harvey. The goal of the center is to get people back into their homes as fast as possible and to streamline the application process for assistance.

**Rebuild Texas Fund** lists several funded projects; most are related to assistance in rebuilding homes. Several grants have been awarded to assist students and teachers as schools reopen, providing classroom materials, student support services and counseling.

The **Florida Disaster Fund**, has supported grants which include financial assistance with rent, mortgage and utilities; food, clothing and replacement of household items; sheltering; crisis intervention counseling; assistance for displaced families with pets; muck-out for flooded homes, and removal of dangerous debris.

**United for Puerto Rico** has assisted with rebuilding, roof tarps and zinc roofs, medical transportation and delivery of donated goods. This sampling of funded projects shows that your

donations are working for the people and have been put to good use. Thank you, again, for helping to care for God's people.

Mission Committee

## Children's Christmas Party

Children in grades kindergarten through six are invited to a Christmas party—lunch and a Christmas movie—at the church on Saturday, December 9, from 12-2 p.m. If you have questions, contact Kim Will at [kwill.npc@verizon.net](mailto:kwill.npc@verizon.net).

## Welcome Baby!

Congratulations to Andrew & Amanda (Ayler) House on the birth of Claire Catherine on November 4, 2017, and to grandparents Wendy & Tim Ayler!

## Church Office Hours/Holidays

The church office will be closed on **Monday, December 25**, and on **Tuesday, December 26**, and on **Monday, January 1, 2018**.

## Worship Services on Christmas Eve Day and New Year's Eve Day

Please note that we will have only one worship service—at 10:00 a.m.—on Sunday, December 24, and on Sunday, December 31. There is no Sunday school on those days. On Sunday, December 24, we will also have Christmas Eve services at 4:00 and 10:00 p.m.

## A Word about Alternative Christmas Marketplace

For the past 15 years the Mission Committee has held an *Alternative Christmas Marketplace*, a mission-

oriented social event. Attendees selected charities and social services organizations to support in lieu of buying Christmas gifts for friends and families. The Marketplace has always been well received as well as successful. Each year the Mission Committee has been able to forward thousands of dollars to local, national and international programs due to congregational generosity.

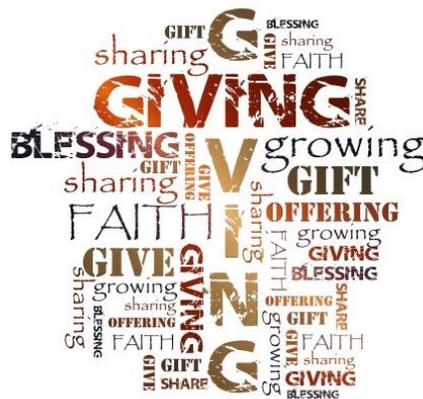
Although we hope this event can continue to be a part of our church calendar in the future, we have made the decision to forego the *Marketplace* for 2017. None of us were happy to make this call, but we felt it was necessary in part due to the huge amount of time and effort this one activity requires. In addition there is a heavy burden of Mission activities for committee members throughout the entire holiday season.

Many of you have become accustomed to the *Marketplace* for Christmas gifts. We are providing a list of the most popular items from last year's event on our website at <https://northchurchwilliamsville.org/2017/10/10/alternative-christmas-marketplace-special-update/>.

## Your Financial Support Is Important

Thank you for your generous support of the church. Our financial gifts to North support the day-to-day, week-to-week activities of the church – worship services, Christian education, nurturing others during difficult and good times, serving others in need. Please note you can make your gifts to North in the following ways:

- Cash
- Check (The church's mailing address is 300 N. Forest Rd., Williamsville, NY 14221.)
- Credit card (<https://northchurchwilliamsville.org/donations/>)
- ACH (through the church's website or through your bank)
- Charitable IRA Distribution (Consult your financial advisor about this.)
- Appreciated stock (Contact the church office for electronic transfer details.)
- A planned gift through your will, insurance policy or retirement fund (Consult your attorney or financial/tax advisor for specific details concerning your estate plans.)



If you would like a summary of your 2017 giving to date, please contact Karen Thomas, church accountant/bookkeeper, at the church office. In January 2018, donation statements will be sent those who make gifts totaling \$100 or more.

## Committed to Giving

In mid-November, letters regarding North's annual stewardship campaign were mailed with a pledge card and return envelope. The Session asked the

congregation to support the church's 2018 annual operating budget through our gifts and pledges. Those contributions further the mission and ministries of God's church.

If you have already returned your commitment card, thank you! If you have not returned it, please prayerfully consider your commitment to God's work and return the card as soon as possible. Like many congregations, North faces financial challenges. Giving at all levels is essential to the church's mission and ministries. (Additional cards are available in the church office and narthex.) Thank you for your generous support of North Church.

## Dedication of Stewardship Pledge Cards

We plan on dedicating stewardship pledge cards on **Sunday, December 10**. As you consider your commitment to North Church in the coming year, we hope you will give in gratitude for God's generosity in your life. And beyond a financial gift, we hope you can commit to becoming more involved in our ministry as we seek to serve Christ and the world through acts of generosity, compassion, and justice.

## Per Capita Giving

Per Capita giving can be thought of as the glue that binds us to all other Presbyterians—PC(USA).

- Mission throughout the world
- General Assembly
- Training
- Education
- and Much more

Many of you have already given. It's not too late to help continue the good works of the Presbyterian Church in the world by contributing \$31.00 each. Simply send a check made out to North Presbyterian Church to 300 N. Forest Rd., Williamsville, NY 14221. Thank you!

## Year-end Giving

For gifts to North to be considered 2017 contributions, please meet these deadlines:

Cash and checks must be received in the church on December 31. (There will be one service at 10:00 a.m.)

If mailing a check, it must be postmarked by December 31.

Online gifts may be made until midnight December 31, using the Donate button on North's website

<https://northchurchwilliamsville.org/donations/>  
Donations statements will be sent in January for 2017 giving. Thank you for supporting the mission and ministries of North Church!



## Wednesday Chair Yoga

Grab a friend and head (to) North for chair yoga! Our favorite instructor, Olivia Ebsary, will lead us. No experience necessary. We provide the chairs! Classes will be offered from 10:15-11:00 a.m. on Wednesdays (except the second Wednesday of the month). Everyone is welcome! There is no cost but donations are gratefully accepted.

Questions? E-mail [oliviaebsary@gmail.com](mailto:oliviaebsary@gmail.com).

## Celebrate Baptism!

**Blayne Patricia Shaw**, born to Megan (Skura) and Bradley Shaw, on January 26, 2017, was baptized on November 26, 2017.

## Arnold, Link Receive Lifetime Membership Awards

On Sunday, October 15, the two circles of Presbyterian Women of North Church honored two special individuals with Lifetime Memberships in Presbyterian Women. Martha Circle selected **Jane Arnold** to receive its award. Sarah Circle chose **Marilyn Link**. Presbyterian Women began the tradition in 1912 of awarding these lifetime memberships as a way of honoring church members for their commitment to Christ and the mission of the church, as well as the purposes of Presbyterian Women, which are: to nurture faith through prayer and Bible study, to support the mission of the church worldwide, to work for justice and peace, and to build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the PC(USA) and witnesses to the promise of God's Kingdom.

## Women's Circles

Martha Circle meets the second Tuesday of each month at 1:00 p.m. at North Church. Sarah Circle meets the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at a member's home.

Upcoming dates are the following:

Martha Circle, December 12 at 1:00 p.m.

Sarah Circle, December 13 at 6:30 p.m. at JoAnne Alderfer's home. The January meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 10, 2018, at 7:00 p.m., at the home of Mary Soom—the annual movie night.

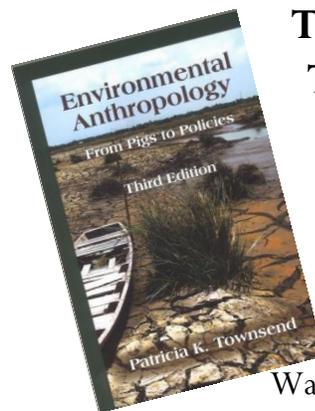
## Advent Adult Ed. Offering

*Sundays at 11:15 a.m. in the library: Nov. 26, Dec. 3, 10, and 17*

During this year's Advent season, we are taking a break from DVDs and planning on discussing a study from *The Thoughtful Christian*. Titled "From Longing to Receiving," the study explores Advent texts of the Revised Common Lectionary, Year B. It emphasizes the Old Testament and Gospel lessons, and refers to the Psalter readings as well. We hope that this contemplative program will help you prepare for the Christmas season. (Study materials are available in the south entrance of the church.)

## Adult Education Bible Study

This study occurs Sunday mornings at 9:15 a.m., in the Resource Center. We will study the Sunday lectionary. The study leaders are volunteers. Everyone is welcome.



## Townsend Releases Third Edition of Book

Congratulations to Patricia K. Townsend, Ph. D., on the release of the third edition of her book, *Environmental Anthropology: From Pigs to Policies*, first printed by Waveland Press, Inc. in 2000 and 2009. The author donated a signed copy to the church library.

## Dress-a-Girl

Seamstresses, doll makers, ironers, cutters, and runners: come sew with us! Meetings occur the fourth Monday of each month from 4:00-8:00 p.m. Stay for the whole time or for as long as you

can. Please bring a salad ingredient for our build-a-salad supper. Dessert and beverages will be provided. (There is no meeting in December.)

## Friends of Night People

We serve a meal at Friends of Night People at 394 Hudson St., Buffalo, the fourth Tuesday of every month. At 8:00 a.m. that day, volunteers prepare the meal in the kitchen at North Church. That evening at 5:00 volunteers help serve the meal. If you would like to become involved in this ministry, contact Barb Beall at [beaschwa87@yahoo.com](mailto:beaschwa87@yahoo.com) or call 716.479.5794. (We are not serving in December.)

## Sympathy and Prayers

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families who lost loved ones.

**Carol Brennan**, September 15

**Jeff Kahler**, September 21 (father of Chad Kahler)

**Don Berg**, October 4

**Carol Meyers**, November 15

**Mary Lou Puleo**, November 16

**Shirlie Korody-Malis**, November 25



## Newsletter Deadline

The next *North Star* deadline is **February 15, 2018**.

## 33<sup>rd</sup> Year of Turkey Basket Ministry Is Successful

The numbers are staggering: 33 years in ministry; more than 6500 items of canned goods, brownie mixes, stuffing mixes, cans of vegetable and cranberry sauce; more than \$3000 in monetary

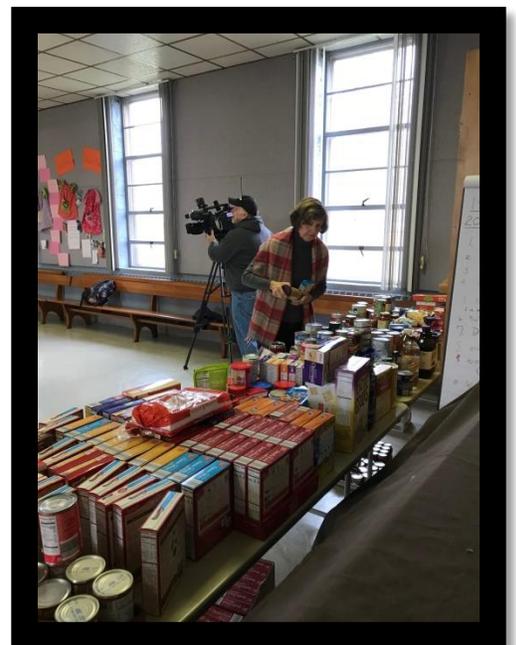
contributions; and countless helping hands making light work of a monumental task.

The success of this ministry—feeding some 500 families a full Thanksgiving meal with a turkey and all the trimmings—relies on the whole village. From the folks at North Church to those far and wide, no single person or organization can take all the credit, nor would they want to.

Partnering together to gather the food to sorting the food to gathering it into complete “baskets” for families and organizations is, in itself, a kind of Thanksgiving dinner in the making without the turkey in the oven smell. Smiles abound on the faces of the students from Williamsville East High School who come and help sort the food to the faces of all the volunteers from North and other churches like Christ United Methodist Church, Amherst Presbyterian Church, Congregation Shir Shalom, and Temple Beth Zion, and new partners like Goldberg Segalla law firm and L&M Financial Services.

We can’t possibly name everyone who helped, but we are grateful for all volunteers who helped North put turkey feet on its mission to reach out in ministry and mission to our “neck” of the woods.

Local markets helped; Dashes and Tops were a part of this ministry, of course. This ministry couldn’t



*Right: Channel 2 reported on Williamsville East students helping us sort all the donations.*

happen without North's Anne McIlroy, Jason Khayat, Rob Powell, Cindy Adams, and so many others. **THANK YOU TO EVERYONE** who helped us feed others through Hope Refugee Services, Jewish Family Services, Lockport Homeless Shelter, Buffalo City Mission, and many others.

## Let's Stay in Touch

### Newsletter (*North Star*)

You can submit story ideas to <http://northchurchwilliamsville.org/weekly-bulletin-and-north-star/> as well as e-mailing it to [n.church@verizon.net](mailto:n.church@verizon.net). The newsletter is produced in March, June, September, and December. The newsletter is available online but we are happy to mail it to you if you wish. Please call the office if you want it mailed to you. **THE NEXT DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 15, 2018.**



### Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/northchurchwilliamsville?ref=hl>

### Twitter

<https://twitter.com/>

### Sunday Bulletin

If you have an announcement, please e-mail [n.church@verizon.net](mailto:n.church@verizon.net) by **noon on Wednesday** or submit it to <http://northchurchwilliamsville.org/weekly-bulletin-and-north-star/>

### Weekly E-mail Blasts

This church-wide e-mail generally goes out on **Thursday evening**. If you are not receiving this communication but would like to, e-mail [n.church@verizon.net](mailto:n.church@verizon.net) to be added.

### Phone

Your call is very important to us. We try to take every call but if we missed yours, please leave a message at 716.632.1330. We make every effort to return your call within 24 hours or less.

#### Phone Extensions:

- 21 Office/Cynthia Machamer
  - 22 Pastor/Bill Hennessy
  - 26 Facilities/Mike Callaghan
  - 24 Organist/Marlene Harrington
  - 29 Bookkeeper/Karen Thomas
- 631-0979 Resource Center

*The staff members listed below do not keep regular office hours and cannot be reached at the church with their own extensions; however, you may leave a message for them with the office administrator: Alanna Carlins, children's choir director; Olivia Ebsary, sacred arts; Tara Martin, web; Regina Koterak, childcare; Mack Barker, shared youth director; and Kim Will, Sunday school coordinator.*

### Contact Information

300 North Forest Rd., Williamsville, NY 14221,  
(716) 632-1330; fax (716) 632-1332  
*Office Hours:* M-Th: 8:30-4:00; F: 8:30-12:30;  
[www.northchurchwilliamsville.org](http://www.northchurchwilliamsville.org)  
*E-mail:* [n.church@verizon.net](mailto:n.church@verizon.net)

*“Followers of Jesus called together  
in faith, hope and love.”*