

## Northbrook Presbyterian Church Newsletter

2026 Theme for Northbrook:

### ***Abide and Thrive: The Power of Connection***

*Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.*

~ John 15:4-5

On November 22, we held a leadership summit for the elders of Northbrook, who were joined in the afternoon by staff, committee chairs, and other volunteer leaders. We wanted to keep finding ways to align our efforts, and we started working on a vision for 2026. We have been discussing growth a lot, but we wanted to make sure our growth was grounded in God's good news. We decided to focus on part of the farewell speech that Jesus shares with his disciples the evening of the Last Supper, as described in the Gospel of John (John 15:4-5).

**Abide** - "Abide in me as I abide in you." As a child, I remember hearing these words every time we took communion at church. Jesus reminded his beloved disciples that any fruitfulness they experience comes from their deep connection with God, the vine. During the retreat, elders were invited to reflect on abiding in God and what it means for their lives and this congregation. Some of their responses were:

- Trust the plan God has set out for us despite the rough journey ahead.
- Living a life of love and forgiveness. Understanding that there is no sin too great that it exceeds God's love, and treating others with that understanding in mind.
- Creating that environment of boundless love; for all to be welcome

**Thrive** - By abiding in God, we can not only survive as a congregation; we can thrive. The elders were also asked to imagine what it would look like to thrive, as individuals and as a congregation. Here are some examples:

- Deepen my faith; let go of what I can't control.
- To be welcoming; to be a place where others are invited to thrive; sharing joy and love but also sharing sorrow; forgiveness.
- Reaching many people – making them aware of God's love. Growing in faith as a congregation. Growing in numbers as a church.

### **The Power of Connection**

Throughout the coming year, we hope to focus on a few tangible ways we may abide and thrive together. One thing we've already begun is being more intentional about getting to know one another better as we gather. As one elder shared their vision, "Common vision brings common energy; power of our personal strengths working together." We hope you will join in our efforts to abide and thrive together in 2026. Like faithful growers, there may need to be some composting, scaffolding, and even some pruning. But, we're excited about the powerful fruitfulness that will come as we are deeply connected with God and each other.

May it be so,  
Pastor Ben



*"Live the Love of Jesus Christ"*

### ***See What's Happening on Sundays in January:***

#### **Sunday, January 4: Epiphany: *The Light is Still Coming***

During this Epiphany Sunday service, we'll remember the Wise Ones from the east who followed the star to worship Jesus. During the service, we'll take down the decorations we placed on the tree at the beginning of Advent. Even though the decorations are being put away, the light is still coming.

#### **Sunday, January 11: Ordination & Installation of New Officers**

Celebrate with us as we ordain and install a new class of elders and deacons to be servant leaders for Christ's ministry here at Northbrook.

#### **Sunday, January 25: Annual Congregational Meeting**

Please join us on Sunday, January 25 following worship for our annual Congregational Meeting. We'll celebrate last year's accomplishments as we look forward to all that the new year has to offer.

### **Our Ongoing Activities Also Resume in January:**

#### **Men's Connection - Tuesdays at 8am and 10am**

Men's Connection meets weekly on Tuesday mornings at 8am via Zoom and 10am in-person in the library and via Zoom. We will resume exploring *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis on Tuesday, January 6. This book is acclaimed as the most engaging account of temptation, and triumph over it, ever written. You will be sure to enjoy! Contact Walter Young at (248) 877-5411 to be included on Zoom. Returning members are keen to welcome men new to this fellowship circle. See you then and there.

#### **Yoga with Lis - Wednesdays at 11am**

Join us for Yoga with Lis classes on Wednesdays at 11am. All are welcome to attend. No fee required, but donations are accepted.

#### **LOGOS - Wednesdays, 5-7pm**

LOGOS is our weekly gathering for kids of all ages with games, songs, devotions, crafts, and dinner. Contact Youth Director, Ken Stetson, for more information. *\*Note: LOGOS will resume on January 7.*

#### **Senior Lunch - 2nd Thursday of the Month at 1pm**

Please join us in the Library at 1pm on the 2nd Thursday of the month for a delicious lunch and plentiful conversation. *In January, we will meet on January 8th.*

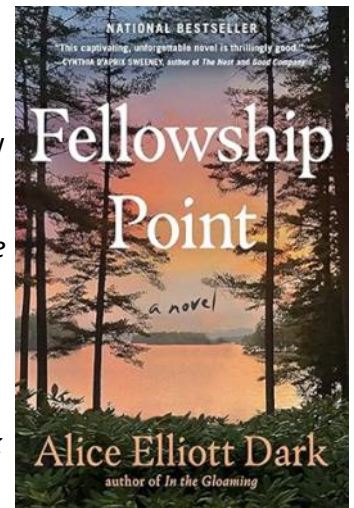


Kids' Connection, our Sunday ministry for young children at Northbrook, is for children in preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Children may begin worshipping with their families in the sanctuary and will be dismissed for Kids' Connection after Pastor Ben's children's message. Each Sunday, the children will learn about connecting with God and others by hearing the stories of the Bible in fun and meaningful ways. ***We hope to see your kids on Sundays!***

## Northbrook Book Club—January 12 at 7pm

Everybody is welcome to attend the next Northbrook Book Club discussion of *Fellowship Point* by Alice Elliott Dark on Monday, January 12, 2026 at 7pm in Fellowship Hall. Winnie D-H is hosting this discussion. Please let Nancy Best know if you would like a Zoom invitation.

Book Summary as written by the author: *Lifelong neighbors and friends Agnes Lee and Polly Garner own shares in Fellowship Point, a beautiful summer colony and bird sanctuary on the coast of Maine. As they turn 80, it's time to make decisions about what will become of their legacy, a question that threatens their long, close, and peaceful friendship. Inspired by the breadth and drama of 19th century novels, this tour de force novel looks at the women's lives, loves, families and work across the 20th century, finally rising to a shocking revelation that will lead to a surprising answer to the dilemma.*



Cynthia D'Apris Sweeney, a New York Times bestselling author says "I can't remember the last time I've fallen so hard for a book. Fellowship Point is about many things: friendship, secrets, legacy, love, family—but the true magic here is in the writing. Alice Elliott Dark has conjured a world so immersive I can still feel it in my bones. I mourned the finish, when I would have to leave behind the characters I grew to love. This captivating, unforgettable novel is thrillingly good."

Sounds like a really good read, and a good discussion is sure to ensue as well! Readers may want to begin sooner rather than later as there are 600+ pages in the book.

Please mark your calendar with these upcoming discussion dates and books:

- ♦ March 9—*The Many Lives of Mama Love* by Lara Love Hardin - Mary hosts
- ♦ April 20—*The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros - Jan hosts
- ♦ June 1—*The Separation of Church and Hate* by John Fugelsang - Yvonne hosts
- ♦ July 13—Book TBD-Shirley hosts
- ♦ August 24—Book TBD-Nancy hosts
- ♦ October 5—Book TBD-Barb hosts
- ♦ November 16—Book TBD-Kim hosts
- ♦ January 11, 2027- Book TBD-Winnie hosts

## Academy of Early Music Friday Night Concert at Northbrook January 16 at 7:30pm

### ***A Red, Red Rose: Celebrating Songs & Poetry of the Scottish bard Robert Burns***

Join us for the Academy of Early Music concert on Friday, January 16 at 7:30pm featuring Les Délices. They will be performing: *A Red, Red Rose: Celebrating Songs & Poetry of the Scottish bard Robert Burns*. From A Red, red rose to Comin' thro the rye and Auld lang syne, Robert Burns' poetry and music are beloved the world over. Celebrating the Scottish bard ahead of his birthday, this new program from Les Délices features "shining" tenor James Reese performing eighteenth-century ballads composed and collected by the poet himself. Once you've raised a glass of Scotch Drink, decried Such a parcel of rogues, tapped your toes to Caledonian Country Dances, and fallen head over heels for Highland Mary, you'll find you've left your heart in the highlands. For ticket information, visit the Academy of Early Music [website](#).



## *Advent & Christmas at Northbrook*

We filled this Advent and Christmas season with a flurry of activity. We began by decorating the sanctuary and church on the 1st Sunday of Advent. December 6th brought our ADVENTure program for our younger children. On the 2nd Sunday of Advent, the Congregational Life Committee organized our annual Christmas Cookie Exchange during coffee hour. On December 11th, our Seniors enjoyed a special Christmas lunch, and the Men's Connection held their annual Christmas breakfast on December 16th. On the 3rd Sunday of Advent, the children of the church performed their annual Christmas play during the worship service. We also held our contemplative Blue Christmas Service on December 17 and our special Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on December 24. On December 28, we held our annual Christmas Carols Service in Fellowship Hall, and January 4th will bring our Epiphany Service, where we'll remember the Wise Ones from the east who followed the star to worship Jesus, and we'll put away the Christmas decorations. Northbrook members also performed many, many acts of love and service, including donating to the Angel Tree and the Hat & Mitten Tree, volunteering at Micah 6, participating in the Moonbeams for Sweet Dreams program at Corewell Hospital, and donating to the Christmas Joy Special Offering.





# Northbrook





**Give a Warm Valentine Hug to Oakland County Neighbors  
by Participating in our Northbrook Bedding Drive  
January 18—February 9**

Let's send some Northbrook warmth to those less fortunate who receive beds and bedding from area non-profits. While all sizes of NEW bedding items are accepted, there is a greater need for twin sizes, especially for children and youth; bedding sets are appreciated, though not necessary. You may want to take advantage of traditional January white sales, which is why we're starting in mid-January and going into February before Valentine's Day. The Bedding Collection will continue through February 9 (Monday). You may place your contributions in the manger area in the main hallway.



**Northbrook Mission Tithe Dollars at Work as We Share the Love of Jesus Christ**

In early December, we delivered a check in the amount of \$2141 to Baldwin Center to use for their holiday programs that serve the Pontiac Community. **Northbrook, thank you** for continuing to give generously so we can address our mission of working to Live the Love of Jesus Christ out into the world.

**Northbrook Family & Friends, You Did It Again!**



With love, joy, and generosity, you spread the Joy of Christmas to neighbors in need with lots of food items for Baldwin Center's Holiday Meal Program and wonderful household items and gifts for two large families. Thank you for your Angel Tree blessings! Also, thanks go to everyone who contributed wrapping supplies and/or helped wrap a sleigh full of presents! It felt like we were in Santa's Workshop!



Jesus, the Light of the World,  
brings hope.

Together, we can bring hope to others  
by receiving the Christmas Joy Offering.



CHRISTMAS JOY  
SPECIAL OFFERINGS  
LEADERSHIP, PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 21

Thank you for your contributions to the PCUSA Christmas Joy Offering! They will be appreciated by the church workers, church workers' family members, and the Presbyterian-related school and college community members who receive support from the offering.

# Calendar

Jan. 1 - 2		OFFICE Closed ~ Happy New Year!
Jan. 4	10am 11:15am	In-Person & Livestream Worship ~ Family Sunday & Communion ~ Deacons' Meeting ~ Hat & Mitten Tree Items Due ~
Jan. 6	8am 10am	Men's Connection via Zoom Men's Connection—In-person & Zoom
Jan. 7	11am 5pm	Yoga LOGOS
Jan. 8	1pm	Senior Lunch
Jan. 11	10am	In-Person & Livestream Worship ~ Ordination & Installation ~
Jan. 12	4:30pm 7pm	Worship Comm. Meeting Book Club Meeting
Jan. 13	8am 10am	Men's Connection via Zoom Men's Connection—In-person & Zoom
Jan. 14	11am 5pm	Yoga LOGOS
Jan. 16	7:30pm	Academy of Early Music Concert
Jan. 18	10am 11:15am	In-Person & Livestream Worship Session Meeting
Jan. 19		OFFICE CLOSED in observance of MKL Day
Jan. 20	8am 10am	Men's Connection via Zoom Men's Connection—In-person & Zoom
Jan. 21	11am 5pm	Yoga LOGOS
Jan. 25	10am 11am	In-Person & Livestream Worship Annual Congregational Mtg.
Jan. 27	8am 10am	Men's Connection via Zoom Men's Connection—In-person & Zoom
Jan. 28	11am 5pm	Yoga LOGOS

Please visit our website: [www.northbrookpc.org](http://www.northbrookpc.org)  
for the most current calendar of events.

## January Birthdays

01/02 Jennifer Gross	01/18 Virginia Thackaberry
01/08 Bill Jordan	01/21 Ron Riggan
01/13 Mary Butler	01/25 Kirsten Annett
01/14 Bonnie Annett	01/25 Will Clemens
01/14 Kay Ragains	01/28 Frank LaSota
01/16 Roy Annett	01/30 Bonnie Hough
01/17 Jonah Taylor	01/31 Tricia LaSota

## January Anniversaries

Darwin & Frida Chungag—6 years on January 11



## In Memoriam



**Richard G. Tengler**

December 14, 1938

December 7, 2025

## Northbrook's Mitten Tree

Let's continue to show our Northbrook love and warmth for children and youth in need of hats, mittens, scarves, and gloves. Please hang your contributions on the mitten tree in the main hallway. While many of the donations have already been delivered to The Baldwin Center, Crossroads, and Fort Street Open Door, we'll collect items through **Sunday, January 4**. Here's a shopping purchase-power tip: If you earn Kohl's Cash you don't need for yourself, think about using your cash coupons to purchase items for the mitten tree!

**Thank you for your generosity!**

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# *“Live the Love of Jesus Christ”*

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## Northbrook

### Presbyterian Church

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#### **Staff Contact Information**

The Rev. Ben Larson-Wolbrink, Pastor ext. 17

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Jannah Cole, Worship Team Leader

Dan Gross, Musician

Pete Zajicek, Musician

Sherrill Heinrichs, Congregational Care Coord. ext. 15

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Ken Stetson, Youth Director

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Kerry Callaghan, Preschool Director ext. 16

[preschool@northbrookpc.org](mailto:preschool@northbrookpc.org)

#### **Worship with Us:**

**10am in the sanctuary**

#### **The Sunday service is also found:**

- Livestream on YouTube—[Northbrookpc](http://Northbrookpc)
- Livestream on Facebook—[Northbrookpc](http://Northbrookpc)

#### **Office Hours**

Mon-Thurs: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Friday: 9am—Noon

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248-642-0200 [www.northbrookpc.org](http://www.northbrookpc.org)