

Northbrook Presbyterian Church Newsletter

Longing for the Light

Those who lived in a land of deep darkness...

This time of year, the darkness can feel a little overwhelming. And, it's not just the hours of daylight. The news reminds us of conflict and polarization, people in power who exploit the vulnerable, and the earth groaning under our mistreatment. There is also darkness in our homes and our hearts: insecurity, regret, shame, fear, and hopelessness. Though the details of the darkness - the shades of the shadows - may look different, each age is challenged by its own dark days.

One of my favorite Advent texts frames this struggle in his generation. Isaiah, the prophet, clearly saw how far God's people had gone off track. Civil war had divided the people, enemy empires loomed outside their borders, and the vulnerable were neglected in their cities. He described his people as "Those who live in the land of deep darkness."

On them light has shined.

The prophecy continues with Isaiah promising the people a coming light in the midst of the darkness.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice
and righteousness from that time on and forever.*

For generations, people repeated these words of the prophet, in the synagogues and in their homes. And they waited. They dared to believe that, one day, the Messiah - the anointed One - would be born.

In the midst of our own deep darkness, we also wait. That's what the season of Advent is about. It's also about trust. We trust that Christmas wasn't just a one-time event that we prepare to remember. When we put up the decorations, when we bake the cookies and plan the parties, when we serve others, we prepare for Christ to be born among us every day.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

In the midst of your preparations, may you be grounded in trust.

In the midst of the heartache, may joy overflow.

And, in the midst of the darkness, may the light of Christ burst forth

...in twinkling lights

...Advent candles,

...and stars that show the way.

May it be so this Christmas,

~ Pastor Ben



"Live the Love of Jesus Christ"



Advent & Christmas at Northbrook

CHRISTMAS PLAY: THE NAZARETH NIGHTLY NEWS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14 AT 10AM

In this Christmas Play, the town of Bethlehem is on the verge of a world changing event, the birth of our Savior. Mary's baby is about to be born and Joseph is looking for a place for them to stay. With the help of the children and youth of Northbrook, worshipers will get to experience the events of the night through the reporting of the Nazareth Nightly News.

BLUE CHRISTMAS WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17 AT 7PM

The holidays can be hard... whether it's grief or depression or simply the busyness of the calendar. If you are needing some space for quiet and hope, join us for Northbrook's Blue Christmas service. Through reflective music and honest prayer, we will release our burdens and hold on to the light together.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 AT 5PM

Peace on earth, goodwill to all! Celebrate Christmas at Northbrook with music, candlelight, and communion. Embrace the joy of this holy night when we celebrate the mystery of God's love born among us.

Sunday, December 28: Christmas Carols in Fellowship Hall

Celebrate the Christmas season with us at this informal and unplugged time together. We'll gather in Fellowship Hall to sing our favorite Christmas Carols and enjoy light refreshments. **There will be no livestream for this service.*

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.

Growing Together—*Grateful*

We'll conclude our fall video series, *Grateful*, on December 3rd at 10am and 7pm, through which we have been exploring what it means to live with gratitude. Stay tuned for more information about Pastor Ben's *Growing Together* series in the new year.

ADVENTure - Saturday, December 6 at 9:30am

Northbrook's ADVENTure program will take place on Saturday, December 6 from 9:30am to noon. Join us for Advent crafts, music, breakfast, and more! Ages 3 through 5th grade are welcome. This event is for kiddos only, as they will be making a special craft to take home for their families for Christmas. Invite a friend or neighbor to join in the fun. Cost is \$10 per child. Sign up in Fellowship Hall or RSVP by **December 1** to Becky in the church office at (248)642-0200 or becky@northbrookpc.org. For more information, please contact Terri Hurbis at terri.hurbis@gmail.com or 248-534-7205.

Christmas Cookie Exchange Coffee Hour - December 7

It's time to check the recipe file for your favorite Christmas cookies for our annual Cookie Exchange! It's so easy to participate. Join us on Sunday, December 7 following worship in Fellowship Hall. Just bring in three dozen of your favorite cookies to share, and then take home an assortment to replenish your supply. Sign up in Fellowship Hall.



Moonbeams for Sweet Dreams - Wednesday, December 10 following LOGOS

All are invited to join us as we participate in Moonbeams for Sweet Dreams on Wednesday, December 10 following LOGOS at Corewell (Beaumont) Royal Oak Hospital (rain, snow or shine). We will meet at 7:45, Moonbeams starts promptly at 8 pm. Bring your flashlights and singing voices to sing sweet dreams to the children who are spending the holidays in the hospital. For parking information, follow this [LINK](#) (you do not need to register). For other questions, please contact Terri Hurbis at terri.hurbis@gmail.com.

Special Christmas Senior Lunch - Thursday, December 11 at 1pm in the Library

Join us for a fun and festive Christmas Senior Lunch on Thursday, December 11 at 1pm in the library. Please RSVP to Becky in the church office at 248-642-0200 or becky@northbrookpc.org by Monday, December 8.
**Note: Senior Lunch will only be held once in December.*

Men's Connection—Tuesdays at 8am and 10am

Men's Connection meets weekly on Tuesday mornings at 8am via Zoom and at 10am in-person and via Zoom. On December 2nd, we will start studying the book by C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*. Contact Walter Young at (248) 877-5411 to be included on Zoom. **Note: Men's Connection will not meet on Dec. 23 or 30th.*

Men's Connection Christmas Breakfast—Tuesday, December 16 at 9am

On December 16, we will meet just once at **9am** for our annual Men's Christmas Breakfast. All men of the church are invited to attend. Regular Men's Connections meetings will then pause for the holidays and resume on Tuesday, January 6th.

Santa's Workshop at Micah 6 - Saturday, December 20

We have the opportunity to be Santa's elves for our neighbors in Pontiac on Saturday, December 20, 9:30 a.m. - noon. We'll greet families, help them "shop," and spread joy during the Christmas season. Micah 6 is using Sign-Up Genius to track volunteers - we've signed up for a "team" so please see Penny Willey or Pastor Ben if you'd like to join us. If this time doesn't work for you, there are other times available throughout the day: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0F4EABA82AA1FC1-60273353-santas#. Any questions, call or text Penny at 248-225-1680. Thank you!



Angel Tree Drive November 16—December 7

Check out the remaining tags hanging from our annual Angel Tree in the narthex! Shopping for items needed by the two families we are supporting is a simple way to bring some Christmas joy to those who face challenges in acquiring even everyday items. Family gifts and any food basket items for Baldwin Center's holiday food distribution are **due back UNWRAPPED at church on Sunday, December 7. Directions for the process are on the back of each tag and on a sign on the sign-up table in the narthex.**

Do you like to wrap presents? We'll have two wrapping "parties", one on December 7 following worship (in the library) and a 2nd one, if needed, on December 14 following worship (in Fellowship Hall). We will have some wrapping materials available, but feel free to bring some from home. Maybe you have a huge stockpile of paper, ribbons, bows, and gift bags, and would like to thin out your abundance?

If you have any questions and/or would like to volunteer to assist with any part of the Angel Tree program, please see or contact Winnie Davies-Hancock: 248-931-0821/C or winsomeann@aol.com.

Thank you so much for your support of our efforts to brighten the holidays of others as we live out the love of Jesus Christ!



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

Christmas Joy Special Offering

Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we lift up past, present, and future leaders of the church. God has blessed the church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to also be supported by their communities. Your contributions to this PCUSA Special Offering support Presbyterian church workers and their families in their time of need, and leadership development and education for communities of color at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges. We will collect this offering through December 22. Whichever way you choose to make your contribution, please indicate online or with your check that your contribution is for the Christmas Joy Offering. Thank you!



Northbrook's Mitten Tree—November 30 thru January 4

Let's 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. We'll collect items through Monday, January 4. Here's a shopping purchase-power tip: If you earn Kohl's Cash you don't need for items for yourself, think about using your cash coupons to purchase items for the mitten tree!

Thanks for your generosity!



Kids' Connection, our Sunday ministry for young children at Northbrook, is for children in preschool through 5th 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!***

Remembering our year with our "Star Words"

Last year for Epiphany, everyone was offered the opportunity to choose a "Star Word" either in worship, online, or by calling the church and asking for one. Part of this practice included trusting that the word each of us selected was the word that we needed...it was meant just for us. Our words might have functioned as a sign for us as we allowed ourselves to learn about and be guided by our word, just as the Magi were guided by the star.



Some of our words seemed strange to us at first, just as the Magi must have been puzzled over their unusual journey. But, during each of our own journeys with our word throughout this year, we were able to discover God guiding us in new and unexpected ways.

It is often easy to miss God in our daily lives. Having an intention word, a "Star Word", to consider each day and to reflect on at the end of the year, allows us to see God's hand at work in ways we may not have anticipated or imagined.



I hope you felt that your "Star Word" journey brought you ever closer to the One who loves us unconditionally and wants the very best for us as we live out God's amazing love in all our relationships and daily lives.



And now, in closing, I offer a prayer from Henry Nouwen's book, *Following Jesus: Finding Our Way Home in an Age of Anxiety*. Perhaps this prayer will bring you peace as we enter this busy season of Advent and look forward to the new year.

"Dear Lord....Be with me today. Listen to my confusion and help me know how to live it. I don't know the words. I don't know the way. Show me the way. You are a quiet God. Help me to listen to your voice in a noisy world. I want to be with you. I know you are peace. I know you are joy. Help me to be a peaceful and joyful person. These are the fruits of living close to you. Bring me closer to you, dear Lord. Amen."

~ Sherrill Heinrichs, Coordinator of Congregational Care



Wow! What a night!! What FUN we all had!!!

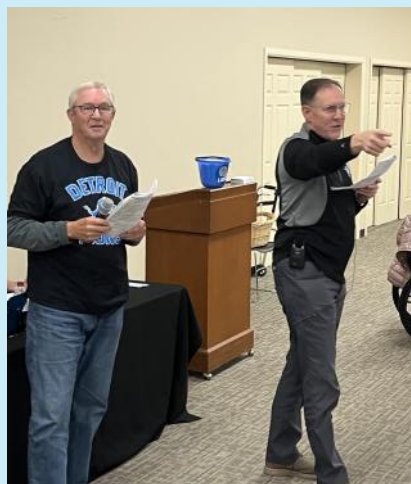
The Main Event Committee is so pleased to announce that the Victory for the Detroit Lions event made over \$16,600 for the 2025 church operating budget. That is truly amazing. When this committee was first formed nine months ago, we hoped to raise \$10,000. Your gifts of time, talent, energy, creativity, and good old-fashioned hard work truly made this event one to be remembered. Your generosity in donating and buying made it financially successful. We are most proud to call this a “homegrown” event. All the talent came from within Northbrook - no outside professionals were needed. Northbrook Church is definitely a great place to belong! We work together as a community and live the love of Jesus Christ together. Amen.

Please enjoy these tidbits of information about the event:

- ◆ The Main Event is the vision of Liz Hurbis.
- ◆ 81 people were seated for the plated dinner. Additionally, 8 others came after dinner. Fellowship Hall was rocking like old times!!
- ◆ Dinner felt and tasted great! The food was prepared by many hands under the direction of Liz Hurbis. She created the menu and added her touches to make it really special.
- ◆ 5 youth learned about dining service, clearing plates, cleaning up, washing lots of dishes, and putting everything away. They even said they had fun doing all that work!
- ◆ 2 youth took care of children in the nursery while their parents enjoyed the night.
- ◆ The decorations took 2 days to put up by the talented Camille Cheairs. We know she had to spend significant time creating and preparing before installing. They came down much faster. She surely gets her exercise going up and down that huge ladder countless times!!
- ◆ Church Committee/Group Raffle Baskets were a HUGE hit. There were ten raffle baskets, which altogether, sold for \$2,665! At \$5 a chance, that's 533 chances bought- wow!! Tool Time with Todd brought in the most at \$475, or 90 chances sold!
- ◆ The TenTimes game was easy and exciting. It cleared \$588.
- ◆ We received cash donations of \$750 from attendees, non-attendees, and a local store.
- ◆ 13 different experiences were offered. These are all opportunities for buyers to fill their social calendar, and more importantly, share time with each other enjoying the activity.
- ◆ Bill Jordan designed the database program for the auction. He knew what to do so that the many spreadsheets could talk to each other and create a final invoice that each buyer received. We were ready to buy a program, but he simply said, “I can do that”. Amazing!
- ◆ We did the right thing regulatory-wise. We received a liquor license (cost \$25) and a large raffle license (cost \$50) from the State of Michigan. Both were displayed at the event.

Now, we would like your feedback. Please email one of us to share what you liked, what you didn't like, and what you would change. Our email addresses are in the directory. Who knows.....there might be another MAIN EVENT next year!

With gratitude and pure joy,
Nancy Best, Kim Bowden-Adair, Liz Hurbis, and Barb Voight



THE MAIN EVENT

NORTHBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AUCTION
Saturday, November 8, 2025



Our 2026 Stewardship Campaign is wrapping up, and we're thrilled to report that for our current campaign, pledges are tracking 10% above those from last year! We are truly encouraged by your generosity and faithfulness. A few responses are still coming in, and if you haven't submitted your pledge card, please do so as soon as possible. The Finance Committee will revise the 2026 budget soon based on the final results.

The big news for the month was our November auction/raffle, The Main Event, which brought in more than \$16k, well above the \$10k goal! All proceeds support the church's operating budget. Huge thanks go to those who organized the event, along with all who participated in the fun & excitement! Be sure to see Nancy's comment about this very successful event earlier in this month's newsletter.

For those who donated to the Main Event, the following is offered for tax purposes:

- ◆ Auction payments are deductible only to the extent they exceed the item's fair market value.
- ◆ Raffle ticket purchases are not deductible.
- ◆ Donors of contributed items may deduct the fair market value or cost basis, depending on the nature of the gift.

Main Event activity will not be reflected on church giving statements. Be sure to contact your tax advisor should you need more information.

As you plan year-end giving, consider some tax-smart options:

- ◆ Qualified Charitable Distributions (IRA gifts for those 70½+)
- ◆ Gifts of appreciated stock or mutual funds
- ◆ Donor-Advised Fund (DAF) contributions
- ◆ Prepaying next year's pledge ("bunching")
- ◆ Legacy gifts through wills or beneficiary designations

Your generosity makes Northbrook's ministry possible—thank you to all who have pledged and participated in the Main Event! Your continued faith and commitment are so important to the mission of our church.

In Faithful Service,

The Finance Committee: Mark Best, Tim Boese, Dan Gross (Chair), Tom MacFarlane, Ryan Stottlemeyer, Mike Krug (Financial Secretary), and Pastor Ben Larson-Wolbrink

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

In October and November, we sent out the following support to nonprofits based on Northbrook's mission tithe of contributions through October:

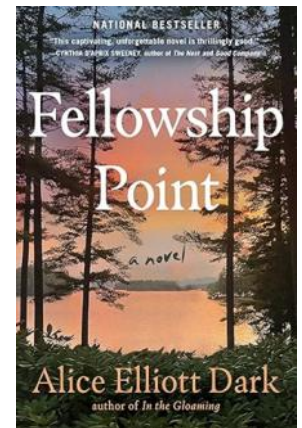
- ◆ \$1,000—Baldwin Center for their holiday programs
- ◆ \$2,468—Baldwin Center – general
- ◆ \$693—Micah 6 Community
- ◆ \$693—Samaritas
- ◆ \$309—Calvin East P.C. WORD Literacy Program
- ◆ \$515—Presbytery of Detroit Hunger Ministries
- ◆ \$1,235—Fort Street P.C. Open Door
- ◆ \$1,235—South Oakland Citizens for the Homeless
- ◆ \$515—Freedom House Detroit

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 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. *Note: There is no book club meeting in December.

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'Aprix 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



Please Welcome Northbrook's New Worship Team Leader: Jannah Cole

Jannah Cole was born in Royal Oak and grew up in Fenton. Jannah is a performer, music educator, and Zumba Instructor. She earned her B.S. in Music, Vocal Performance from Rochester College in Rochester Hills, and her Master of Music Education in Teaching Artistry from Bowling Green State University. Jannah has been teaching at A Joyful Noise Music Studio in Fenton for 13 years. She is also the contemporary worship director and leads Saturday worship at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church in Birmingham. She has a deep faith and has expressed a desire to keep learning and growing. We look forward to learning and growing with her!

TRUNK OR TREAT 2025



We were blessed with a beautiful fall evening to celebrate all our little ghouls and goblins!

Thank you to everyone who decorated a trunk, helped pass out candy, and spread the word to make this one of the best-attended Trunk-or-Treats at Northbrook.



Calendar

Dec. 2	8am 10am	Men's Connection via Zoom Men's Connection—In-person & Zoom
Dec. 3	10am 11am 5pm 7pm	Growing Together Video Series Yoga LOGOS Growing Together Video Series
Dec. 6	9:30am	ADVENTure Program
Dec. 7	10am 11:15am	In-Person & Livestream Worship ~ Family Sunday & Communion ~ Cookie Exchange Coffee Hour ~ Angel Tree Presents Due ~
Dec. 8	4:30pm	Worship Comm. Mtg.
Dec. 9	8am 9:30am 10am	Men's Connection via Zoom Finance Comm. Mtg. Men's Connection—In-person & Zoom
Dec. 10	11am 5pm 8pm	Yoga LOGOS MoonBeams for Sweet Dreams
Dec. 11	1pm	Christmas Senior Lunch
Dec. 14	10am 11:30am	In-Person & Livestream Worship ~ Christmas Play ~ Joint Session & Deacons' Mtg.
Dec. 16	9am	Men's Connection Christmas Breakfast
Dec. 17	11am 7pm	Yoga Blue Christmas Service
Dec. 20		Micah 6 Project
Dec. 21	10am	In-Person & Livestream Worship
Dec. 24	5pm	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Dec. 25-26		Office Closed— <i>Merry Christmas!</i>
Dec. 28	10am	Brunch & Carols Service in Fellowship Hall (No Livestream)
Dec. 29-Jan. 2		Office Closed

Please visit our website: www.northbrookpc.org
for the most current calendar of events.

December Birthdays

12/09	Dorothy Warren	12/23	Donna Young
12/14	Marilyn Dean	12/26	Shelly Tengler
12/14	Richard Tengler	12/28	Todd Dolan
12/20	Christopher Jordan	12/28	Lizzie Riggan

December Anniversaries

Gary & Linda Voight—40 years on December 28



In Memoriam



James M. Johnston

June 2, 1930
November 15, 2025



“Live the Love of Jesus Christ”

Northbrook

Presbyterian Church

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Worship with Us:

10am in the sanctuary

The Sunday service is also found:

- Livestream on YouTube—Northbrookpc
- Livestream on Facebook—Northbrookpc

Office Hours

Mon-Thurs: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Friday: 9am—Noon

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