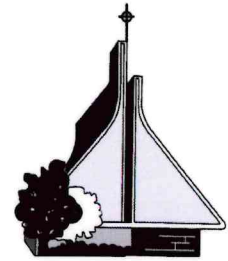


# NORTHMINSTER NEWS



VOLUME 70, ISSUE 4

APRIL 2026



## HOLY WEEK

Deadline for May articles is April 20th. Articles received past the deadline will be included in the following month's edition. All articles are welcomed and encouraged, but may be edited for length and clarity.

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Website: [northminsteronline.org](http://northminsteronline.org)

Worship Service 10:00 AM & Online

**PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 10AM**—Come celebrate the arrival of Christ the Kings as He rides into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. The waving of palm branches, triumphant music, and a stirring sermon will help us usher in the events of Holy Week.

**GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 7PM**—The dramatic reading “Peter’s Calvary” will be presented, interspersed with musical selections from our Choir and Bell Choir. You won’t want to miss this presentation as it will be an inspiration to all, as we realize how our Lord still loved and cared for Peter despite his shortcomings, just as He forgives and cares for each of us.

**EASTER MORNING, APRIL 5, 10AM**—Come hear the joyful and triumphant conclusion of “Peter’s Calvary” and join us as we celebrate our risen Lord! The service will be filled with music from our Choir and Bell Choir, as well as the singing of joyous hymns and a triumphant sermon by Pastor Steve.

### Northminster Church Staff

Pastor: Steve Shullanberger	Interim Children’s Director: Debbie Smith
Office Manager: Debbie Smith	Custodian: Clint Murphy
Treasurer: Kerry Banks	Organist: Jonathan Doram
Financial Secretary: Carol Stanhope	Choir: Destiny Elazier
Sunday Custodians: Clint Murphy	Sound Engineer: Matt Anselmi
Camera Operator: Aidan Brown	Bells: Mary Balkow
Orchestra Conductor: Mary Balkow	

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- Pastor
- Membership
- Christian Education
- Financial & Birthdays



## The Hidden Gifts of Christ

Recently I read a true story about a young family from Southern California. Dennis, Nancy, and their young son Eric were traveling south from San Francisco to their home in Los Angeles. They had spent Christmas Eve with relatives in the Bay Area, but both parents had to work the next day, thus, it was necessary to travel on Christmas. About noon, Dennis and Nancy decided they were hungry so they stopped at a local diner for lunch. Naturally, because it was Christmas, the restaurant was nearly empty and Eric, their young son, was the only child in the restaurant.

As they entered the diner, Eric could be heard screaming with great glee, "Hi there," the two-word expression that he always thought was one. The little boy pounded his hands on the metal chair. He was excited and he wiggled and giggled with great joy. Then Nancy, his mother, saw the source of her son's merriment. On the other side of the restaurant sat a man in a tattered coat who was dirty, greasy, and wore baggy pants with his toes extending out from his worn-out shoes. He was smiling at Eric. "Hi there, little baby. Hi there, big boy. I see you." Dennis and Nancy exchanged looks and said without words, "What are we to do with this poor devil?"

Meanwhile, the meal they ordered came, but the man on the other side of the room continued to speak: "Do you know patty cake, little boy? Do you know peekaboo?" Eric continued to laugh and answered with his patented phrase, "Hi there." The whole scene was embarrassing to both Dennis and Nancy, so they decided to quickly pay the check and leave. They both implored heaven, "Lord, let us get out of here before the man speaks to Eric again."

However, Eric seemed to have other plans as he reached out both arms in a typical gesture of children that says, "Please, pick me up." Eric began to lunge toward the homeless man with his arms open wide.

The man asked Nancy, "Would you let me hold your baby?" There was no need to answer as Eric almost propelled himself into the man's arms. Suddenly an old and apparently homeless man and a very young baby, in a very real way, consummated their love. Eric laid his tiny head upon the man's ragged shoulder. The man's eyes closed and tears flowed down his cheeks. Both Nancy and Dennis were awestruck. "You take care of this baby," said the man to Nancy.

Somehow, she managed to respond, "I will."

The man gave Eric back to his mother and said, "God bless you, ma'am. You have given me a great gift."

Nancy could say nothing more than a muttered, "Thanks." Now with Eric in her arms she and Dennis walked to the car both saying to God, "Lord, forgive us, forgive us."

Eric's mother was petrified and I suspect most of us would be, too, if our infant child had an encounter with a homeless person. Society, unfortunately, has trained us when we perceive danger to remove ourselves from any encounter with those who stand on the fringes or margins of our society — the homeless, victims of AIDS, immigrants, even the elderly. We feel they have nothing to offer; how can something good come from those who are out of the mainstream? But Nancy learned one of the great lessons of life and received a special revelation of the goodness of humanity, "through the back door," when she and her son gave a homeless man the only gift he wanted, someone who could give unconditional love.

*Continued on next page*

When Jesus was born, died on the cross, was resurrected, and ascended to heaven the world was given the most precious gift it could possibly receive. But Jesus gifts did not stop there. He continues to give to those who believe and follow Him. Sometimes we wonder what those gifts are.

Paul's thanksgiving to the Ephesians is a presentation of the many ways that Christ showered the Christian community, including those at Ephesus, with blessings, suggesting how this fledgling community might respond in faith. First, the Pauline author speaks of how we have been chosen by the Lord. Obviously, this reality began when God first called Abraham, asking him to move from his native land of Ur to what is now Israel, with the promise that if he was faithful he would become the father of a great nation as numerous as the stars in the sky. Throughout salvation history we know of God's faithfulness, even with the continual unfaithfulness of his people.

The Ephesians, and all of us by extension who have inherited the promise, are God's children by adoption. Made in the image and likeness of God, we were chosen by the creator for a special role in salvation history. What a privilege we have been given by God. But with the privilege comes responsibility in an equally challenging way. Children have significant responsibility to their parents. Thus, we, God's children, have the responsibility to hold up our end of the bargain. This means to be obedient, dutiful, and purposeful in our lives.

Another special blessing, a hidden gift from Jesus, is redemption. Jesus was given a mission by his Father. He was asked to initiate the kingdom of God, but this project continues to require our daily efforts. From our personal perspective, Jesus came to die in a salvific way for us. Jesus, the innocent lamb, was sacrificed for our redemption. The sin of the first Adam is now countered by the supreme obedience of the second. Since we have been ransomed by Jesus' sacrifice, we, as with our adoption as God's children, have a responsibility to repay. We must live as those who are ransomed; we must live in hope. Too often today, especially with the seemingly never-ending troubles, obstacles, and difficulties, the temptation to lose hope is great. But, as they say, "Hope springs eternal." Our status as redeemed people, ransomed at a great price, tells us that even in the darkest hour — personal health issues, financial collapse, divorce, or the death of a family member or friend — we must have the confidence, as the gospel says, to believe that Jesus is a light that no darkness can overcome.

The next special hidden gift of Christ to all of us is forgiveness of sins. The scriptures abound with stories about Jesus' desire to forgive sins. The story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) presents the best example. There is no question the woman is guilty; Jesus and the woman never deny it. But Jesus' concentration is on forgiveness, not condemnation. He challenges the women's accusers to cast the first stone, but realizing their own sinfulness, they all drift away, one by one. Jesus then forgives the woman with the admonition, "Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (John 8:11). The Lord's condemnation falls only on those who openly reject his message. On the other hand, any who sought reconciliation found it in Jesus. One of the few people we know, at least as far as scripture is concerned, who is with God now is the thief on the cross who asked Jesus to remember him. We recall Jesus words, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Paul says that Jesus has revealed to us another hidden gift, the mystery of his will. What is Christ's will? Paul tells us it is to gather all things in heaven and on earth under his headship. As a community of faith, we form a team, but as with all teams, especially those in athletics, there is need for a leader or coach to guide the whole. For us, of course, the leader, the captain is Jesus. He is a central figure of our faith. As the hub of a wheel is essential to hold together the integrity of the whole unit, so the community of faith is nothing without Christ. Paul wants the Ephesians to know that he is only the messenger; he is not the captain. Jesus is the one who leads us. We, in turn, must be team players. While individual effort is essential in any team endeavor, it is the team that is most important. We must work together if we are to properly build the kingdom.

Another special hidden gift is our inheritance from Christ. This gift is nothing less than eternal life. This is the most special of all gifts from Christ. Jesus has promised us we will hear his words: "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34b).

# MISSION

## HUNGER COMMITTEE

Our mission for 2026 is to continue to work with Dyer Kelly School to provide 70 families in need with food bags for their Christmas Holiday and support our local food closets.

Last year with the help of the congregation of 483 canned food items, we were able to provide each of the families with 2 grocery bags of food items at a cost of \$43 per family. We hope that you will continue to help feed those in need again this year by supporting the canned food items.

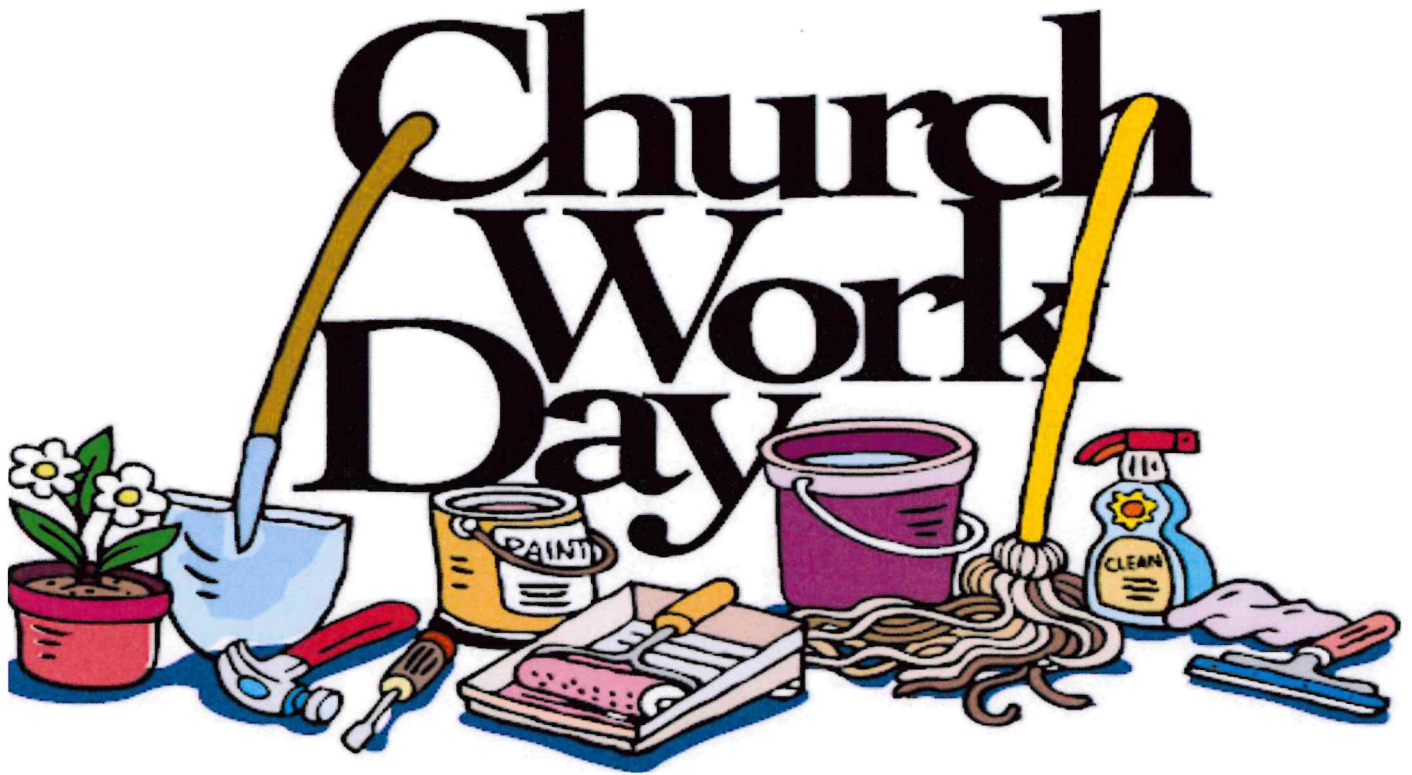
We will be asking for canned food items starting in June. The canned item for each month will be announced in May. Watch your Newsletter !

Remember to stop at the Harvest Table each Sunday during coffee hour to see what is available for a donation. The first Sunday of each month there will be delicious baked treats. In late April the “Nicole/Peter Nursery”, will have starter vegetable plants available for all you gardeners.

We will also be sponsoring a Craft/Baker Faire on October 11<sup>th</sup>, so start your craft items to donate now! More details to follow.

With your generous donations in 2025 we were able to do the Christmas food bags and donate \$500 to Union Gospel Mission and the North Highlands Food Ministry. Thanks to all who continue to support the Harvest Table with fruits and vegetables each week.

**“Together We Feed”**



Come help us spruce up the church by participating in the all-church work day! This is a great opportunity to join together as a community, lend a hand, and prepare our space for spring & summer. Everyone is welcome—bring your energy and enthusiasm!

**APRIL 11, 2026**

**8AM—12PM**

## ADULT EDUCATION

# Wednesday Recharge!

## Pastor Bible Study

**10:30AM—** Join us in the library every Wednesday as we study the Bible. The current study is Acts “The Spread of the Gospel”. Bring a sack lunch & stay for fellowship afterwards! Dessert is provided.



## TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

**9:30AM** every Tuesday in the home of Millie Payne.

Join us for a morning treat & Bible Study

(We pick a book of the Bible & study it all the way through)

Call Mary Holden if you would like to attend.



**WORKING WOMENS BIBLE STUDY  
(A.K.A. Not Yo Mama's Bible Study)**

**Friday, April 17th at 6:30PM**

**6:30pm Wine, Sparkling Apple Cider & Hors d'oeuvres**

**7pm Bible Study & Prayer**

**8p Dessert**

**"Daring Women of the Bible"**

**Join us to learn about women in the Bible who dared to trust, believe, and step out in faith. This fresh look at these women will help you discover new insights into God's character, persevere through difficult times, and find joy in the hope that Jesus provides. For the lesson in April we will be studying Esther, "Letting God be in Control" by Courtney Joseph Fallick.**

## FINANCIALS

There is no financial data available at this time.

Bring your freshly cut flowers to worship on Easter morning for the Easter Cross. Please leave a good amount of stem for placing into the chicken wire. Thank you!



Edward Gibson	4/2
Sandy Barnes	4/22
Aidan Brown	4/26
Mildred Hassebrock	4/27
Nancy Wolford Landers	4/30

